Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force

Putting Theory into Practice: Asset Mapping in Three Toronto Neighbourhoods

Research Project #5

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5

1. INTRODUCTION 9

The Context 9
Defining Community Infrastructure 10
Assessing Neighbourhood Vitality 11
Proximity and Access to Human Services 11

Our Model/Approach 12

2. METHODOLOGY/PROCESS 14

Approach to Asset Mapping Research 14

Selection of Neighbourhoods 14

Asset Mapping Research Process 15

Participation 20

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE STUDY NEIGHBOURHOODS 21

Henry Farm 21
Population Growth and Composition 25
Housing 26
Immigration and Language 27
Education 27
Income 28
Employment 28
Mobility 28

Roncesvalles 29
Population Growth and Composition 29
Housing 31
Immigration and Language 31
Education 32
Income 32
Employment 32
Mobility 33

Woburn 33
Population Growth and Composition 35
Housing 35
Immigration and Language 36
Education 37
Income 37
Employment 38
Mobility 38

4. NEIGHBOURHOOD FINDINGS 40

Henry Farm 40
- Understanding the Neighbourhood Boundaries 40
- Perceptions of the Neighbourhood 40
- Neighbourhood Vitality Indicators 41
- Neighbourhood Strengths and Assets 42
- Use of Neighbourhood Assets: Facilitating and Barrier Conditions 44
- Investment Priorities 48

Roncesvalles 49
- Understanding the Neighbourhood Boundaries 49
- Perceptions of the Neighbourhood 49
- Neighbourhood Vitality Indicators 51
- Neighbourhood Strengths and Assets 53
- Use of Neighbourhood Assets: Facilitating and Barrier Conditions 54
- Investment Priorities 56

Woburn 57
- Understanding the Neighbourhood Boundaries 57
- Perceptions of the Neighbourhood 59
- Neighbourhood Vitality Indicators 60
- Neighbourhood Strengths and Weaknesses 61
- Use of Neighbourhood Assets: Facilitating and Barrier Conditions 62
- Investment Priorities 66

5. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS 68

Definition and Scale of Neighbourhood 68

Neighbourhood Assets 69

Assessing Neighbourhood Assets 70

Neighbourhood Vitality 71

Public Spaces and Places 72

Supporting Neighbourhood Voices 77

Investment Priorities 78

6. REFLECTIONS AND LEARNINGS 80

Content 80

Investment Framework 81
- Core Foundational Assets 82
- Networking and Bridging 82
- Framework for Understanding and Mapping Assets 83
- Linkage to Social and Economic Policy 84

Research Process 85
- Process and Tools 85

Outreach and Engagement 87
Participation 87
Community Meeting Locations and Sites 88
Co-Facilitation 89

Applicability to Other Neighbourhoods in Toronto 90

7. APPENDICES 91

NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSET ASSESSMENT CHART 92

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW 99

FOCUS GROUPS TEMPLATE - COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDERS 103

FOCUS GROUPS TEMPLATE - RESIDENTS 107

FOCUS GROUPS TEMPLATE - BUSINESS 110

NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSET MATRIX 113

NEIGHBOURHOOD SOUNDING 117

Executive Summary

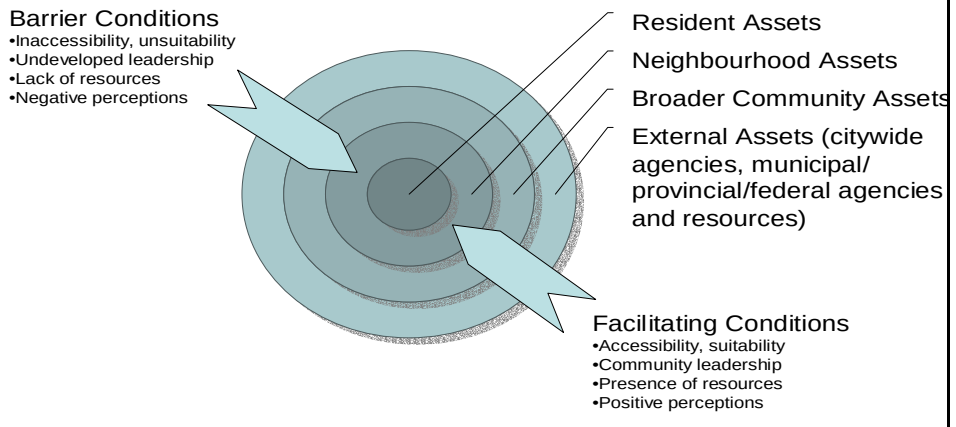
Toronto is a city of neighbourhoods that are central to the social, cultural and economic vitality of our region. But in recent years, there have been indicators that many neighbourhoods lack community services, poverty is growing, and residents are under stress because of a variety of factors.

Research Project #5 was about neighbourhood capacity - understanding what it is and how it can be strengthened and supported. Neighbourhood capacity was measured in this project by mapping community assets in three Toronto neighbourhoods.

Research Project #5 was informed by four preceding Strong Neighbourhoods projects and tested theories related to community capacity and assets, access to infrastructure and indicators of neighbourhood vitality proposed in these projects. In addition, the reports of these projects helped to refine the research question for the fifth project and to develop the lines of inquiry as part of its methodology.

A "community asset" is broadly defined as a person, physical structure or place, business, service or other accessible resource used by local residents for their personal, social, economic or cultural benefit. Figure 1: Mapping Community Assets Framework describes the research framework for identifying and measuring community assets in the three selected neighbourhoods. This project focused on the local neighbourhood – the second ring – as the unit of study, although access to and use of resources in the surrounding community were also considered.

Figure 1: Mapping Community Assets Framework



An asset is a person, physical structure or place, business, service or other accessible resource used by local residents for their personal, social, economic or cultural benefit.

Employing this framework, Research Project #5 used existing service databases to create physical asset maps for the three neighbourhoods, prepared demographic and

socio-economic profiles and engaged a range of local stakeholders in discussions of measures of neighbourhood vitality, community strengths and weaknesses, and in the identification of neighbourhood assets and the "facilitating" and "barrier" conditions that affect local assets. As part of its work, the project developed an asset mapping and assessment tool, which helped to identify and describe the asset base as perceived and experienced by local stakeholders.

Henry Farm, Roncesvalles and Woburn were selected as the three research neighbourhoods. While very different in their sizes, locations and socio-economic and demographic characteristics, they each contain at least one of the census tracts identified in the United Way report Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Poverty *as among the 50 census tracts with the highest poverty in Toronto. Roncesvalles is an older neighbourhood with a strong commercial and residential sector. It is located in the west end of the old City of Toronto and has more established services and community infrastructure and assets. Henry Farm is a newer neighbourhood, built up in the 1960s and 1970s as part of Toronto's planned suburbs. It is a compact, high-density area, composed of two distinct and physically separated neighbourhoods. Henry Farm has a base of neighbourhood infrastructure and is working to further develop this base. Woburn has a population three or four times larger than those of the other two research neighbourhoods and is more geographically spread out. It is located in central Scarborough and is a diverse and rapidly growing settlement area for newcomers to Toronto. In comparison to Henry Farm and Roncesvalles, it is clearly an underdeveloped neighbourhood with very limited assets.*

The research highlighted the diversity and dynamic nature of neighbourhoods and the challenges of defining "neighbourhoods" where residents disagree or do not identify with the boundaries set by the City of Toronto. The findings suggested a number of factors that should be taken into consideration in defining neighbourhoods and in guiding investment strategies:

- *historical identification with a defined community*
- *natural and/or structural physical boundaries that separate or connect areas*
- *common identification and/or experience in an area or among residents in an area*
- *commonly used local facilities, neighbourhood centres or landmarks that connect people to the neighbourhood*
- *administrative and political boundaries that define and focus attention on specific areas*

Despite the differences between the neighbourhoods, the discussions of neighbourhood assets were remarkably consistent. Five main asset areas were identified:

- *physical assets: neighbourhood infrastructure, housing, transit and mobility, shopping, public and private spaces*
- *social assets: neighbourhood connectedness, participation, engagement, neighbourhood development, pride of place, neighbourhood voice and influence*

- *diversity-related assets: supports for diverse population groups and interests, including language, settlement and employment supports*
- *service assets: range of programs and services and locally based neighbourhood planning and service coordination/collaboration assets*
- *safety and mobility assets: ability to participate safely and without fear*

The research demonstrated that asset mixes vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. While some of the neighbourhoods have better assets, none of the three communities felt they had all necessary assets in sufficient quantities.

The neighbourhood assets were assessed from five perspectives: ***availability, proximity, access, capacity*** *and* ***quality****. Efforts were made to identify barriers that impeded use of the assets as well as the facilitating conditions that encouraged or supported their use. For example, lack of* ***availability****, or the absence of an asset or resource, was considered a key barrier in Woburn but less so in the other two neighbourhoods.* ***Proximity*** *highlights physical distance and real and perceived proximity barriers like major roads or hills. It presented more of a barrier in Woburn, but use of Henry Farm assets was also limited by proximity barriers.* ***Access*** *issues, linked to the operation (hours of service, user fees) and procedures (eligibility rules) of organizations, were more hidden than either availability or proximity. Access barriers were identified in each of the three neighbourhoods, although they varied in intensity. The* ***capacity*** *of organizations and service providers to serve neighbourhoods could include elements like level and nature (short-term vs. long-term) of funding, physical space and staff levels and expertise. It was an important issue for all three neighbourhoods and requires external investment to address. Finally,* ***quality*** *of the assets was not seen as a barrier except with regard to culturally sensitive and language-appropriate services. None of the three neighbourhoods felt they had adequate levels or quality of multilingual and culturally specific services.*

Stakeholders in Henry Farm and Roncesvalles described the strengths and weaknesses of their neighbourhoods in physical, social and service terms. Streetscape, quality of the physical and residential environment, shops, and trees and open space were frequently mentioned. Similarly, diversity, safety, sense of community and engagement were highlighted as social strengths. The range of services, community space and supports available at a local level was also important to residents. Woburn residents had a narrower perspective and identified specific services rather than broader neighbourhood characteristics as community strengths, perhaps reflecting their lack of identification with the neighbourhood and their limited input to the project.

All three neighbourhoods identified the need for investment in multi-use, accessible space in neighbourhood centres or hubs. The form of the investment desired varied depending on the existing assets and infrastructure of each neighbourhood, but there was a common understanding that the space was to be shared by residents, service providers and other institutions and that its use was to be flexible, encompassing gatherings, program delivery and other activities. All three neighbourhoods also identified the need for related investment in community development, capacity building, coordination and planning. Specific service investments were identified for each neighbourhood; common elements among all three included investment in services for youth and settlement services. And finally, it was recognized that investments in neighbourhood infrastructure must be supported by investment in

economic and social public policy. Individuals cannot participate in and contribute to neighbourhoods unless they have adequate housing, employment and income to support themselves and their families. Without these investments, efforts to strengthen neighbourhoods will be only partially successful.

The research concluded that an investment framework for building and sustaining strong neighbourhoods must:

- *support fundamental or core facilities and services supplemented by neighbourhood-specific supports and programs*
- *ensure that neighbourhood-level networking and bridging mechanisms and supports are in place for effective planning and coordination within neighbourhoods and across neighbourhoods*
- *use a conceptual framework based on an understanding of the range of assets that contribute to strong and vibrant neighbourhoods and analytical tools to assess use, value and access to the assets; and use a range of quantitative and qualitative data and measurement tools including local stakeholder input*
- *recognize the importance of broader social and economic policy to reinforce local investments in assets and community capacity building*

The variation among the three study neighbourhoods is considerable, but there were some common findings and conclusions about investment. This result suggests the potential of a tool like the one developed for this project – one that balances quantitative and qualitative input and seeks out local knowledge and insight. Since neighbourhoods evolve and change, the process described in more detail in this report will need to be applied in ways that respond to the dynamics, variation and fluidity of neighbourhood life. Asset mapping is a foundation for neighbourhood-level analysis that can be strengthened by incorporating learnings from this project.

1. Introduction

This project was one of six research projects commissioned by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force. It was the largest and perhaps most comprehensive in that it applied the results and research from the other research projects to three case-study neighbourhoods in Toronto. The goal was to map the assets of the specific communities and to develop a deeper understanding of neighbourhoods. This research and analysis will help the task force to consider options for neighbourhood development and investment and to test tools such as the infrastructure continuum, the measures of neighbourhood vitality and the definition of neighbourhoods.

This project built on a range of work undertaken over the past few years by the United Way of Greater Toronto, the City of Toronto and the Toronto City Summit Alliance. In an April 2003 report, *Enough Talk*, the alliance recommended the creation of a tripartite agreement involving all levels of government to support community service infrastructure in neighbourhoods across the city. The present project also built on United Way's report *Poverty by Postal Code: The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty*, released April 2004, which documented the increase in neighbourhood poverty in Toronto from 1981 to 2001. And finally, it built on the discussion and findings from the Toronto City Summit in June 2004, a one-day conference of local civic, community, labour and business leaders organized by the City of Toronto. The summit identified several key issues that threaten Toronto's future economic strength and quality of life.

The Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force was established in May 2004 to address challenges facing neighbourhoods and communities as identified and discussed in the work of the Toronto City Summit and research by both the City of Toronto and United Way of Greater Toronto. Six research projects were commissioned:

1. Why Strong Neighbourhoods Matter: Implications for Policy and Practice
2. The Role of Community Infrastructure in Building Strong Neighbourhoods
3. Measuring Neighbourhood Vitality
4. Neighbourhood Social Infrastructure in Toronto
5. Putting Theory into Practice: Asset Mapping in Three Toronto Neighbourhoods
6. Template for Multi-Partner Funding

The Context

This document, *Putting Theory into Practice: Asset Mapping in Three Toronto Neighbourhoods,* reports on the final of five projects focusing on neighbourhoods and infrastructure. It has been informed by the earlier reports and will contribute to the increasing understanding of neighbourhoods through its work in three distinct neighbourhoods in Toronto. The following section summarizes highlights and conclusions from the earlier research projects and sets the context for this report by connecting the first four projects to the current one.

In *Why Strong Neighbourhoods Matter: Implications for Policy and Practice*, Freiler (2004) presents a review of the literature in relation to definitions of “neighbourhood,”

the structure of "neighbourhood" and the role of "neighbourhood" as a forum for either social well-being or social decay. Freiler notes that the literature shows new awareness that social capital – including social trust, norms and networks of civic engagement – has potential as a building block for social cohesion and for finding local solutions to problems. Three types of social capital are identified: 1) "bonding social capital," which exists in horizontal relationships and networks and serves to build trust and cooperation among individuals and within communities; 2) "bridging social capital," which exists in horizontal relationships and networks and functions across ethnic groups or with work associates to break down barriers and enable collaboration; and 3) "linking social capital," also known as scaling up, which provides a vertical link and connects communities in collective action for social change and development at the policy and/or systems level.

Strong neighbourhoods are described in the literature as being inclusive, vibrant, cohesive and safe. The development and maintenance of strong neighbourhoods requires a number of enabling factors, including a strong social infrastructure and services to build and support social capital, as well as shared public spaces to support physical and social proximity and social interaction among individuals and groups and contribute to a sense of mutual respect. Socially mixed or heterogeneous neighbourhoods are generally considered to be positive and strengthening and may be a way to avoid negative neighbourhood effects and support positive health status. Physically attractive neighbourhoods support people who want to be there to feel comfortable and feel proud of their neighbourhood. Such neighbourhoods attract the middle class, thereby increasingly the likelihood of diversity and the resulting neighbourhood traits such as services, reputation and social order. Open boundaries ("porosity") enable people to move in and out of the neighbourhood freely and ensure that the neighbourhood is open to outsiders. Walkability and mobility, defined as services and amenities within a 10-minute walk, are also important. High density, as opposed to overcrowding, a distinction Jane Jacobs highlights, increases connections and interactions between people, reduces isolation and increases safety.

Defining Community Infrastructure

The Role of Community Infrastructure in Building Strong Neighbourhoods by Rothman (2004) defines community infrastructure and its structural components and describes the role of community infrastructure in strong neighbourhoods. Rothman presents a summary of different approaches to defining the characteristics of community infrastructure and suggests that it is a complex system of facilities, programs and social networks that aim to improve people's quality of life. She notes the need for emphasis on the integration of physical and social planning and development of services, networks and physical assets that form the foundation of a strong neighbourhood. Community infrastructure includes institutions that are the building blocks of civil society, where the community sector functions, support for organizations is generated, social capacity is created and where community infrastructure's integrative functions help to create a sense of place in neighbourhoods.

Rothman notes that Toronto's broad range of community services are similar to those described in the literature in that they work interdependently within and across communities. Rothman categorizes the assortment of organizations that make up the community infrastructure into a typology. Its components are quality-of-physical-life

services, human development services, cross-community support services, rights and advocacy services, neighbourhood economy services and physical environment services.

Rothman also distinguishes between “foundation community services” and other services, noting that foundation services are the essential building blocks in all neighbourhoods which ensure that the community infrastructure thrives. Rothman emphasizes that foundation services adopt a holistic view of the community and anticipate, monitor and respond to community needs over time. These community anchors also provide physical meeting space for other services and community meetings and events which foster social relations, community cohesion and civic engagement, such as schools and neighbourhood centres. Though not labelled as such in Rothman’s paper, “non-foundation services” are additional services and facilities that are necessary to meet the unique demographic and local needs of each neighbourhood, such as settlement services.

Assessing Neighbourhood Vitality

In *Measuring Neighbourhood Vitality*, GHK Consulting Ltd. (2004) presents a review of the literature and describes practices from several municipalities around the world in relation to types of indicators and their usefulness in assessing neighbourhood vitality. As well, it presents best practices in the development and use of neighbourhood vitality assessment tools and applies these practices in the development of a system of neighbourhood vitality indicators for Toronto.

The work sets out to identify attributes that are important in defining neighbourhood vitality, in order to determine the best indicators and proxies for measuring it. From a lengthy list of possible measures, and after consideration of a range of selection criteria, including availability of data sets, GHK has produced a short list of measures to assess the vitality and strength of Toronto’s neighbourhoods using six broad domains: safety, health, economy, education, urban fabric and demographics.

Proximity and Access to Human Services

The fourth research paper is titled *Neighbourhood Social Infrastructure in Toronto.* Low, Krepicz and Rix (2005) explore the geographic gaps in two types of human services: those that are considered “core,” meaning that they are required by anyone, regardless of social or economic circumstance; and those that address the needs of specific population groups. In their work, the authors compare population distribution with the distribution of human services. In each of Toronto’s 140 neighbourhoods, they measure and map the percentage of each neighbourhood’s population that is within walking distance (defined as one kilometre) of a community service.

Key findings from this review include evidence that service coverage varies for the 140 neighbourhoods across the city. Neighbourhoods farther from the city’s centre generally have poorer service coverage. They find that services traditionally located in core parts of the city are facing service or access challenges because of geographic changes to demographics. They conclude that proximity to service increases the likelihood that individuals will receive care or support.

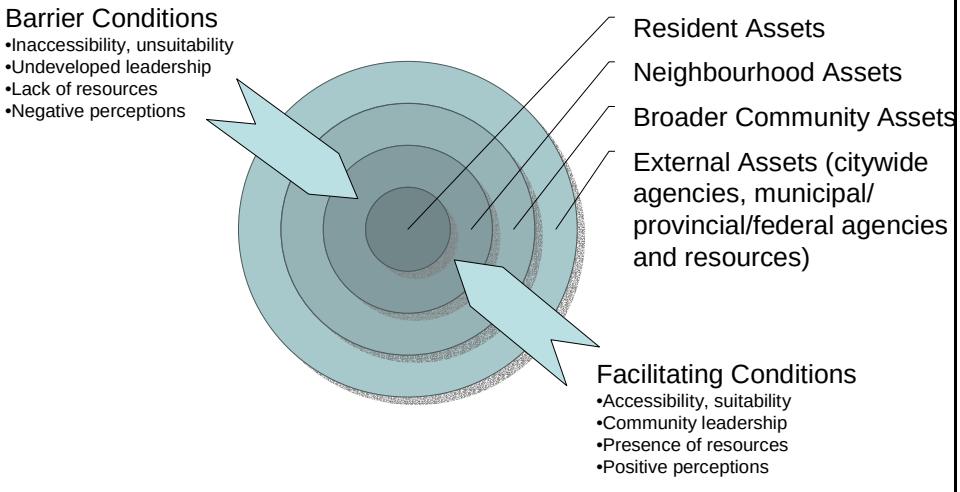
Our Model/Approach

The reports of the Strong Neighbourhoods Research Projects #1 to #4 informed and supported the development of the model and approach to the current project, Strong Neighbourhoods Project #5.

This research project focused on the capacity of neighbourhoods as indicated by the existence of both a strong base of community assets and the conditions that enable or disable neighbourhood use of this asset base. A neighbourhood's capacity consists of the talents, skills, strengths, abilities and resources that are or can be activated to create healthy and socially supportive living environments where individuals and families can thrive.

This study sought to identify and measure capacity by mapping community assets in three Toronto neighbourhoods using the framework outlined in Figure 1. This framework describes a neighbourhood asset base as having multiple layers, represented by concentric circles. At the centre, individual residents have knowledge, skills, experience and abilities that are important assets for personal benefit and potentially for community benefit. Locally, within reasonable physical access to residents, assets can exist at both the neighbourhood and the broader community level. Neighbourhood assets in closest proximity to residents might be primary schools, parks, playgrounds, public gathering spaces, small businesses and local workplaces.

Figure 1: Mapping Community Assets Framework



An asset is a person, physical structure or place, business, service or other accessible resource used by local residents for their personal, social, economic or cultural benefit.

Outside the immediate neighbourhood, but still within the general community, another ring of assets includes libraries, secondary schools, hospitals and health clinics, etc.

Finally, external resources at the citywide level or available through other levels of government and other provincial and national organizations form the last ring of the asset base for local residents, neighbourhoods and communities.

In its broadest sense, an asset is understood to be a person, physical structure or place, business, service or other accessible resource used by local residents for their personal, social, economic or cultural benefit. Assets can respond to pressing needs, perform a stabilizing function or develop the capabilities of local residents and communities. The focus of this study was at the level of the local neighbourhood and surrounding community, including supports and resources provided to the neighbourhoods and communities by external city-wide, provincial or other agencies.

As part of the study, an asset mapping process was developed for testing in three selected neighbourhoods. As well as creating demographic and socio-economic profiles of the selected neighbourhoods as the basis for an asset analysis, a process was designed to engage local stakeholders (residents, community service leaders, local business people, faith leaders, etc.) in identifying and assessing strengths and weaknesses of the local asset base. This input based on local knowledge and experience was used to identify conditions that “facilitated” access and use of local assets as well as conditions that were “barriers” to access and use. Several potential facilitating and barrier conditions are suggested in Figure 1.

In summary, this research project was informed by the definitional work and discussion of strong neighbourhoods in Research Project #1. It applied the notions of a continuum of community infrastructure and of core or foundational assets from Research Project #2 in its review of the asset base of the selected neighbourhoods and communities. It tested community receptivity and response to the neighbourhood vitality indicators produced by Research Project #3 and used the conceptualization of gaps in community infrastructure and maps of service infrastructure produced by Research Project #4 in its work with local service leaders and residents on potential areas for strategic investment in the neighbourhood or community asset base.

2. Methodology/Process

Approach to Asset Mapping Research

Research Project #5 focused on asset mapping in three neighbourhoods selected by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force. The research process took a case study and exploratory approach to the identification and assessment of assets in the three selected neighbourhoods, attempting to apply and test the constructs and conclusions produced in the previous research projects.

Although the research team compiled, collected and used existing quantitative data on the three selected neighbourhoods, it focused primarily on qualitative information collected from community stakeholders. This information was collected in the following ways:

- interviews with key informants knowledgeable of the respective communities
- structured focus groups with community service providers, residents and members of the local business community
- community forums open to all stakeholders for response to presentations on the asset mapping analysis in progress

The research had a participatory element, in that it engaged local stakeholders in the asset mapping process by sharing the research in progress for feedback, validation and interpretation. As well, local service providers identified additional research participants and were helpful in identifying and inviting residents and local business people to the focus groups and the community forum. The researchers contracted with local facilitators in each of the three neighbourhoods to co-facilitate the focus groups and community meetings.

Selection of Neighbourhoods

The three neighbourhoods were selected by the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force with input from policy and research staff of the City of Toronto, the United Way and the consultants involved in the research project. A list of the 50 census tracts with the highest incidence of poverty in Toronto, based on the 2001 federal census, was used to identify candidate neighbourhoods. These high-poverty census tracts were identified in the report *Poverty by Postal Code*, produced by the United Way in 2004. The boundaries of the neighbourhoods used for this project were defined by the City of Toronto. The staff linked the high-poverty census tracts to the City of Toronto's identified neighbourhoods. The neighbourhoods as defined by the City of Toronto Community and Neighbourhood Services Department vary in size and include a number of census tracts each.

The task force, City and United Way staff and the research consultants developed a set of criteria to guide the selection of the study neighbourhoods, which included the following.

- Neighbourhoods selected must not have any involvement in other significant research projects or initiatives such as the Mayor's Safety Task Force, the Toronto District School Board's community use of schools initiative or other major redevelopment projects (such as Regent Park).
- Neighbourhoods with small population or a large proportion of university students were excluded from consideration.
- The three neighbourhoods should be geographically dispersed across the city of Toronto.
- There should be some level of diversity in the amount of infrastructure. The neighbourhoods should have diverse forms of housing, high- and low-density areas and urban and suburban neighbourhoods. While the neighbourhoods under consideration included the 50 census tracts with the highest rates of poverty in the city, neighbourhoods should have a wide range of incomes.

Applying these criteria to the range of potential study neighbourhoods, the staff recommended six neighbourhoods to the task force for consideration. Three neighbourhoods were selected from the group of six: Woburn (Scarborough), Henry Farm (North York) and Roncesvalles (Toronto). They are shown in Map 1: Three Neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto.

The three neighbourhoods were identified for research purposes, to test the asset mapping tool. They could not expect to benefit in any material way from their involvement in the project.

Asset Mapping Research Process

The project research is outlined in Figure 2: Asset Mapping Research Process.

The research project began with the development of a demographic and socio-economic statistical profile of the selected neighbourhoods based on data at the census tract level. Information was compiled at the census tract level and was consolidated at the neighbourhood and city level.

Service infrastructure maps were created by the City of Toronto using the database of the Toronto 211 community information service to provide an understanding of non-profit service organizations located in each of the three neighbourhoods. The 211 service database was supplemented by other available sources of data on neighbourhood infrastructure including schools, emergency services, social housing, libraries, and parks and recreation facilities.

The third element of the project research was a series of "key informant" interviews with between 10 and 12 neighbourhood stakeholders. A target range of neighbourhood stakeholders was identified, recognizing that availability and access to the stakeholders would vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. They included

Map 1: THREE NEIGHBOURHOODS IN THE CITY OF TORONTO

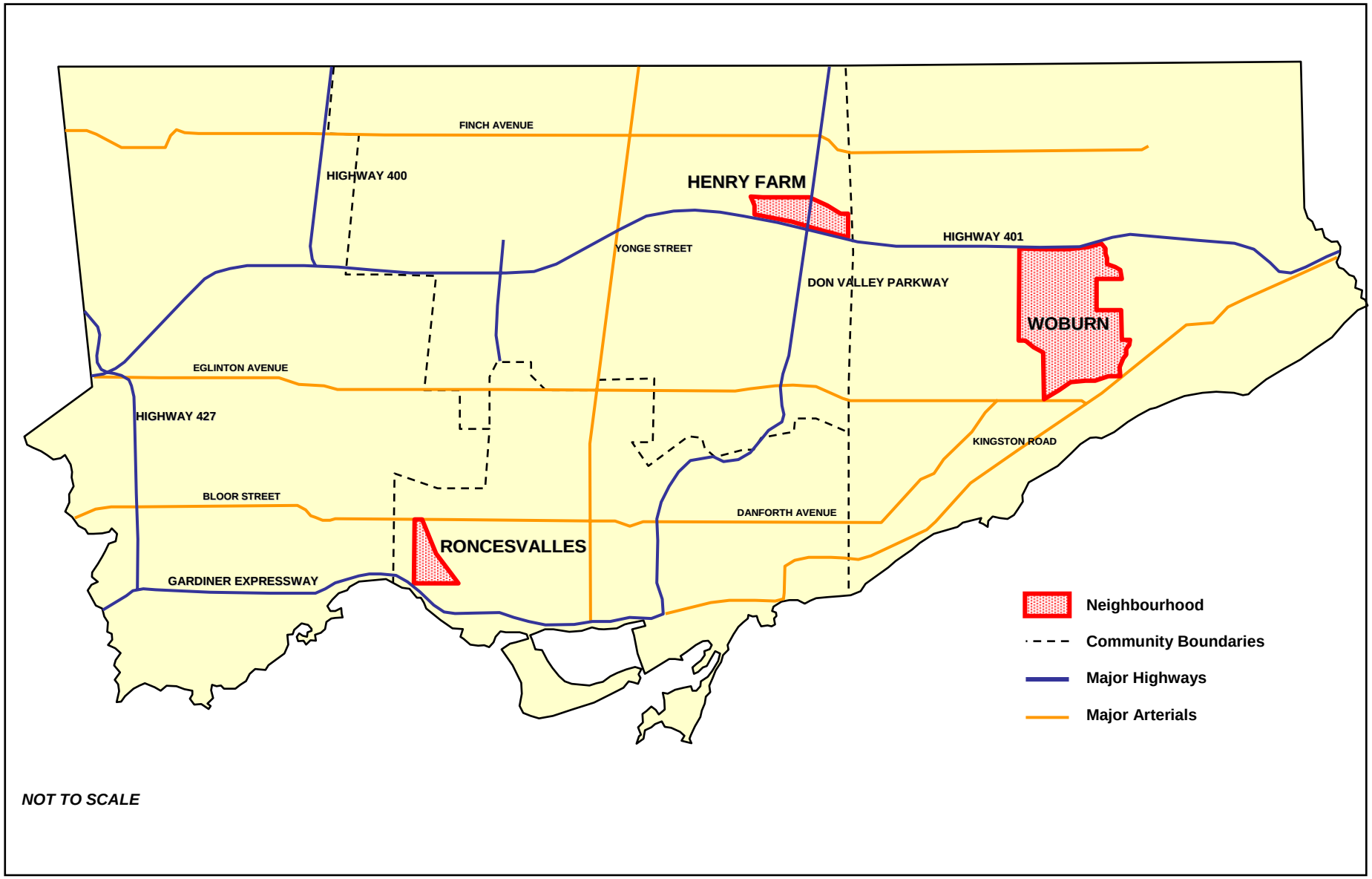
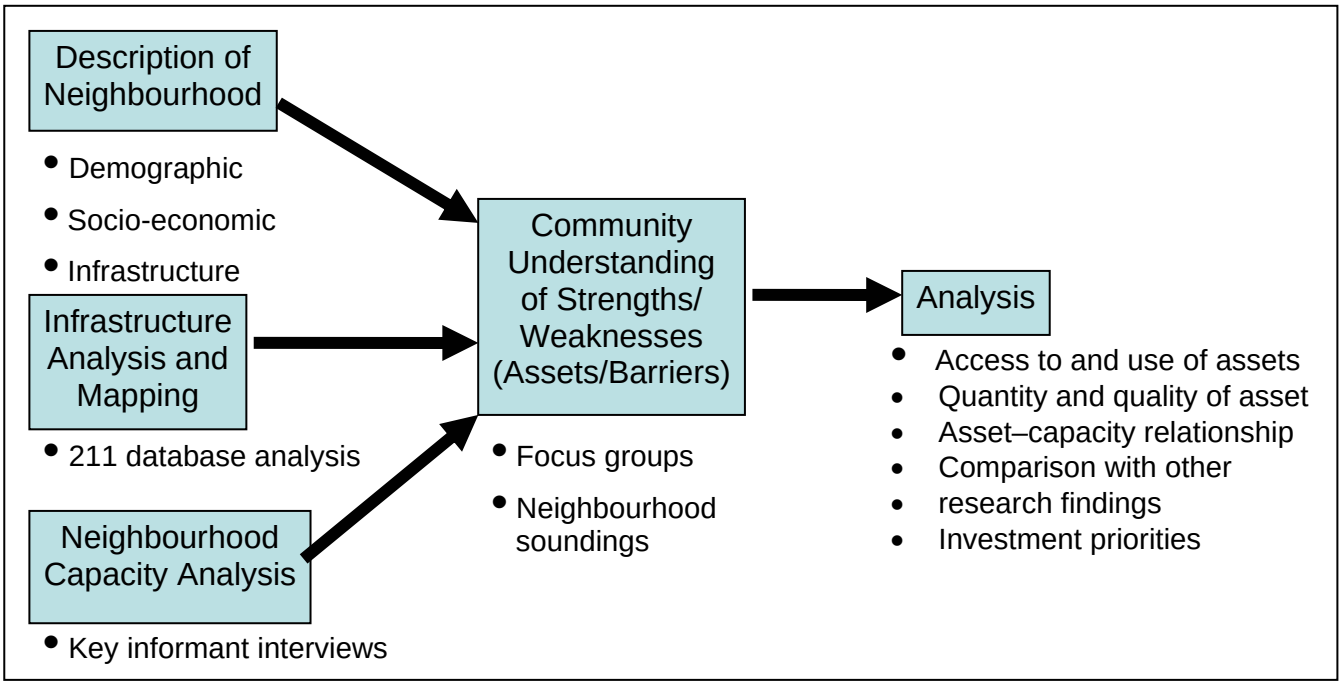


Figure 2: Asset Mapping Research Process



representatives from the following organizations.

- Community Health Centres or Public Health Offices
- recreation centres and groups
- BIA or businesses
- schools
- information centres
- legal clinics
- multi-service centres
- interfaith groups
- associations and clubs (Kinsmen, Lions, etc.)
- libraries
- service providers

The interview questions for key informants were developed to create an overview of the three neighbourhoods' makeup, strengths/weaknesses and local issues/opportunities. It was expected that the key informants would help identify local people and organizations that could participate in the planned neighbourhood focus groups and possibly identify prospective local facilitators for the neighbourhood focus groups. The interviews also helped identify other information, studies and reports on the three neighbourhoods that could inform the analysis.

A Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Chart (Appendix 1) was designed to document the range of neighbourhood assets as well as barriers and facilitating conditions to their use. The chart was influenced by the key findings from the earlier Strong Neighbourhoods research projects. It allowed the researchers to record key informant

interview data, supplemented by information from focus groups, by categories of major neighbourhood assets.

Copies of the interview questions, the Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Chart and the service map of the neighbourhood were shared with key informants before the interviews. A copy of the key informant interview template is attached as Appendix 2. It was expected that key informant interviews would take approximately 60 minutes, but they varied from about 45 minutes to 120 minutes. Efforts were made to conduct all interviews in person; however, where this was not possible, they were conducted by telephone.

The findings from the socio-economic and demographic analysis, service mapping and key informant interviews were consolidated into a preliminary understanding or map of each of the three neighbourhoods. These conclusions were presented to between four and six focus groups of neighbourhood stakeholders. Two residents' focus group meetings and two service providers' focus group meetings were held in each neighbourhood. The business sector was also involved, although the scope of involvement varied from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Two business focus groups were conducted in the Roncesvalles neighbourhood, one was held in Henry Farm, and a presentation was made to the Chamber of Commerce in Scarborough with follow-up phone discussions with available businesses.

Efforts were made to involve a broad and diverse range of service providers active in the three study neighbourhoods. They were identified from the 211 service maps of organizations as well as by the key informant interviews. All of the participating service providers were involved in the three neighbourhoods, although not all were physically located in the study neighbourhoods. Business participants were identified in a similar way. Key informants were asked to identify businesses that were active in the community and contacts were made with local Business Improvement Area (BIA) groups, where they existed. Finally, service providers and other organizations were asked to help identify some residents from their organizations to participate in the residents' focus groups. Identification of resident participants varied from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, depending on the number of organizations and their level of involvement and support for the project.

The focus groups were designed to solicit input and reaction to the neighbourhood map. Each focus group began with a brief overview of the task force and its research agenda. A summary of findings from the socio-economic, demographic, and service mapping, from the Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Chart and from key informant interviews was presented, and focus group participants were asked to comment on the findings. A community co-facilitator led each focus group in a discussion of a number of set questions. These questions were adapted for the three types of focus groups while maintaining a common emphasis on the research issues. Copies of the focus group meeting agendas and questions are included as Appendices 3, 4 and 5.

In general, the focus groups asked participants whether the project consultants "got it right": whether they had an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the neighbourhood. The sessions probed the barriers faced by residents in accessing the community assets and the barriers encountered by service providers and other institutions in the three neighbourhoods. Service providers, residents and businesses were challenged to identify neighbourhood strengths and weaknesses and to identify

Figure 3: Analysis of Facilitating and Barrier Conditions to Use of Neighbourhood Assets

Asset Variables	Use of Assets	
	Facilitating Conditions	**Barrier Conditions**
Availability	• Present • Planned/developing	• Absent • Lost (e.g., cut, relocated)
Proximity	• Within neighbourhood • Reasonably close (depends on users) • Good transportation to asset	• Natural or constructed physical barriers • Not easily accessible by roads or transit • Not close to neighbourhood users
Accessibility	• No/low user fees or equipment/participation fees • Promotion/outreach to potential users • No/limited wait times • No eligibility requirements • Appropriate hours of operation	• User fees/no subsidies • Restrictive eligibility • Limited hours of operation • Long waiting lists
Capacity	• Not at full capacity all the time • Well maintained physical conditions • Adequately staffed • Appropriate use of volunteers to enrich program • Continuous program and stable program funding	• Always over capacity and underfunded • State of disrepair • Understaffed • Over-reliance on volunteers to run basic programs
Quality	• Responsive to users • Culturally based or sensitive • Multilingual and multicultural • Adaptive modes of service/support • Appropriate expertise and skill base	• Hierarchy of support provided (e.g., English-speaking vs. non-English-speaking) • Rigid/inflexible modes of service /support • Underskilled staff

priorities for neighbourhood investment. They were also asked to comment on the set of six proposed indicators of neighbourhood vitality developed in Research Project #3.

The focus group findings were consolidated with the other research work to produce a detailed understanding of the three neighbourhoods. This included a comprehensive overview of neighbourhood assets and an understanding of the barrier and facilitating conditions consolidated based on five variables or categories: availability, proximity, accessibility, capacity and quality. Figure 3: Analysis of Facilitating and Barrier Conditions to Use of Neighbourhood Assets provides an overview of the five variables and the analytic criteria applied to determine the strength or weakness of the neighbourhood asset base.

All participants in the focus groups and key informants were invited to a "sounding," where the results of each neighbourhood's asset analysis were presented and discussed. A Neighbourhood Asset Matrix template was developed to show in summary form the highlights of the asset analysis. A completed Neighbourhood Asset Matrix for one neighbourhood is presented as Appendix 6. Participants were offered an opportunity to validate and fine-tune the research findings and to provide input into a discussion of neighbourhood strengths and weaknesses and priorities for future investment. A copy of the Neighbourhood Sounding Template is included as Appendix 7.

Participation

Figure 4 summarizes the level of participation in the asset mapping research project in each of the three neighbourhoods.

Figure 4: Participation by Neighbourhood

	Key Informant Interviews	**Focus Groups**			**Community Soundings**
		Service provider	Resident	Business	
Henry Farm	15	29	29	3	25
Roncesvalles	10	12	13	18	12
Woburn	18	20	4	2 plus presentation	7 + 1 by phone

Focus group meetings were scheduled at a time most likely to be convenient to the participants and to encourage maximum participation. Service providers' focus groups were scheduled in the daytime and evening; residents' focus groups were in the evening and on Saturday; and businesses' focus groups were in the daytime and evening. The community soundings were held in the evening. All the meetings were held in accessible neighbourhood locations, including local schools, public libraries, daycare centres, Ontario Early Years Centres, City of Toronto recreation facilities and other non-profit community service agency sites.

3. Introduction to the Three Study Neighbourhoods

Map 1 shows the locations of Henry Farm, Roncesvalles and Woburn. **Henry Farm** is in North York. It is a suburban neighbourhood that is experiencing enormous population growth and diversity. **Roncesvalles** is in the west end of Toronto. It is an older, more established urban location with a relatively large number of services. **Woburn**, in the middle of Scarborough, is a very large, rapidly growing, diverse and newer suburban neighbourhood characterized by high-rise apartments and older single-family housing.

The three neighbourhoods vary in population from about 12,000 to over 50,000 residents. Each neighbourhood includes at least one census tract that was identified in the United Way report *Poverty by Postal Code* as a high-poverty area. The three neighbourhoods also vary in location, age and socio-economic characteristics. Figure 5: Overview of Neighbourhood Characteristics summarizes information on the three neighbourhoods.

The Social Development and Administration Division of the Community and Neighbourhood Services Department (City of Toronto) produced service maps for each of the three neighbourhoods using the 211 Toronto service database as their foundation. This database includes all service providers listed with the 211 Toronto community information service. The maps do not provide detail on the number or type of programs offered from any one location or the number of independent service organizations that may share or use space at one physical address. This service foundation was augmented by maps of all elementary and secondary schools in the public and separate school systems, hospitals, locations of social housing, emergency shelters, places of worship, public libraries in the Toronto Public Library system, City of Toronto parks and recreation centres and Public Health Offices.

The three neighbourhood base maps provided the researchers with a broad overview of the local service landscape and were used as a starting point for discussions with key informants and other stakeholders on neighbourhood assets. They were enhanced and revised using information received in the study process and became working tools to support the analysis.

Each neighbourhood is discussed in detail below.

Henry Farm

Henry Farm, or City of Toronto Neighbourhood 53, is located between Sheppard Avenue East and Highway 401 and between Leslie Street and Victoria Park Avenue. Highway 404 runs up the centre of Henry Farm. (See Map 2: Henry Farm.) Henry Farm has the smallest population of the three neighbourhoods, with 11,701 residents in 2001. It includes, however, one of the highest-density census tracts (CTs) in Toronto, CT 301.03, known as the Parkway Forest community, between

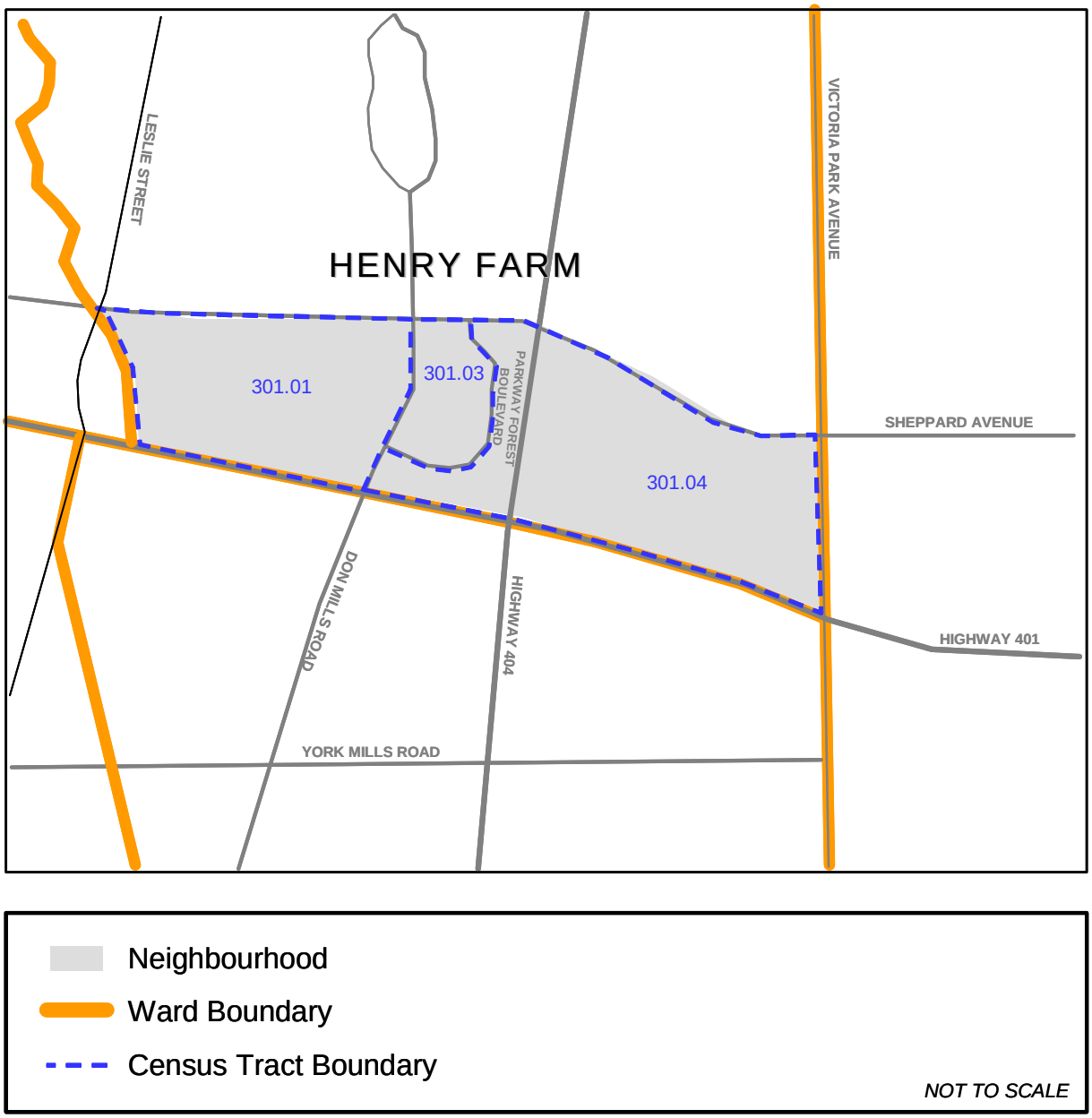
Figure 5: Overview of Neighbourhood Characteristics

		Henry Farm[1]	Ronces-valles[2]	Woburn[3]	City of Toronto Average
Number of Census Tracts	Total census tracts	3	4	9	525
	Census tracts identified by the UWGT as high-poverty	2	1	3	50
Rate of Poverty	Economic families (2001)	28.4% (high poverty)	21.6%	25.5% (moderate poverty)	19.4%
	Unattached individuals (2001)	39.5%	47.5%	51.6%	37.6%
	Population in private households	30.6%	27.4%	28.6%	22.6%
Lone-Parent Families as % of all families		18.5%	20.1%	21.6%	19.7%
Total Population (2001)		11,701	16,012	51,015	2,481,494
Population Growth Rate (1996–2001)	Annual rate of growth	0.92%	0.57%	1.88%	0.79%
	Rate of change 1996–2001	4.7%	2.9%	9.74%	4.03%
Age (% of total population)	0-14 years	21%	16%	21%	17.5%
	15-24 years	13%	11%	13%	12.5%
	25-64 years	57%	62%	53%	56.5%
	65+ years	9%	11%	13%	13.7%
Dependency Ratio (children and seniors as percentage of working population, age 15–64)		42%	37.7%	52.6%	45.1%

[1] Henry Farm includes the following census tracts: 301.01, **301.03**, **301.04** (higher-poverty census tracts are in bold and underlined).
[2] Roncesvalles includes the following census tracts: 47.01, **47.02**, 48, 52 (higher-poverty census tracts are in bold and underlined).
[3] Woburn includes the following census tracts: 356, **357.01**, **357.02**, 364.02, 365, 366, 367.01, 367.02, **363.03** (higher-poverty census tracts are in bold and underlined).

		Henry Farm	Ronces-valles	Woburn	City of Toronto Average
Household Income Characteristics	Census family median income, 2000	$54,936	$53,188	$52,283	$76,082
Housing Affordability	% of total renters paying more than 30% of income on rent	47%	47%	47%	43%
Average Gross Rent (2000)		$991	$740	$752	$852
Immigration Characteristics (% of total immigrant economic family population)	Immigrated before 1991	28%	65%	43%	57%
	Immigrated 1991-2001	73%	35%	57%	43%
Households	One-family households	72.5%	53.2%	72.3%	62.8%
	Multiple-family households	4.6%	2.6%	6.2%	3.6%
	Non-family households	22.9%	44.3%	21.6%	33.6%

Map 2: HENRY FARM NEIGHBOURHOOD



Don Mills Road and Highway 404.

The four major arterial roads and two major highways that delineate and divide this neighbourhood serve as significant defining internal physical boundaries for the area. Don Mills Road is an additional defining boundary for the two residential communities to the east and west of it within the larger neighbourhood that the City has designated as Henry Farm.

One of the census tracts, 301.01, is enclosed between Sheppard Avenue East, Highway 401, Leslie Street and Don Mills Road, with only three access roads, one from the north (Shaughnessy Boulevard) and two from Don Mills Road. Locally this area is known as and is signed at the north access road as the "Henry Farm Community." It has a population of 2,964 (2001).

The Parkway Forest area includes census tract 301.03, an area bounded by Sheppard Avenue East on the north, Don Mills Road on the west and Parkway Forest Drive circling around it from Don Mills Road up to Sheppard as the southern and eastern perimeter. It also includes part of CT 301.04, from Parkway Forest Drive to Highway 404.

Census tract 301.04 includes the residential area west of Highway 404 (population 3,489) that is considered part of the Parkway Forest area, and an office and commercial area (16,520 employees in 557 firms). A transit study conducted for the Sheppard Corridor defined the area between Highway 404 and Victoria Park as non-residential and primarily significant for its office and professional employment base.[4] The transit planning study analyzed the area between Don Mills, Highway 404, Sheppard and Highway 401 as one distinct residential area.

The distinctions in physical boundaries of these three census tracts are matched by major differences in demographic composition and social and economic characteristics, especially as between CT 301.01 and the combined CT 301.03 and CT 301.04. The latter two CTs were identified in the United Way's *Poverty by Postal Code* as high-poverty, high-need areas.

Population Growth and Composition

Between 1996 and 2001, the Henry Farm neighbourhood experienced a rate of population growth of 4.7%, higher than the overall city of Toronto average of 4.03%. Almost all of the population growth occurred, however, in the two census tracts to the east of Don Mills Road, which combined for a 6.3% growth over this period, compared with 0.2% growth west of Don Mills. The Sheppard Corridor transit study also reported this high growth rate for the Parkway Forest area and noted that it had a much higher population density than any other residential area between Don Mills Road and McCowan Road.[5]

Henry Farm has a younger population than the city of Toronto average, with significant internal variation. The Parkway Forest CTs have a younger population than the Henry Farm CT, with 21% and 17.4% respectively aged under 14 years. A

[4] City of Toronto, Urban Development Services (2004). *Phase 1: Profile Report Sheppard Corridor Study*. Toronto: City Planning Division, p. 65.
[5] Ibid., p. 16.

higher proportion of seniors (13.6%) live in the CT west of Don Mills Road than in each of the Parkway Forest CTs (6.7% and 8.5%). The Henry Farm neighbourhood has a dependency ratio of 42%, which is lower than the city average. The dependency ratio is the number of children and seniors as percentage of working population (15–64 years).

In the Henry Farm neighbourhood, 18.5% of census families are single parents with a much higher proportion of single-parent families in the Parkway Forest area (20.5%) than west of Don Mills (13.1%). Almost one-third of married couples in the area west of Don Mills have no children at home, compared with about one in five married couples in the Parkway Forest area.

Compared with the city average (42.9%), the combined CTs of Henry Farm have a significantly higher proportion of households with three to six or more persons (56.1%). While this is true for all three CTs in the neighbourhood, the Parkway Forest CTs have a higher proportion of households with three or more people (58.1%) than the rest of the neighbourhood. The Henry Farm neighbourhood has a higher proportion of one-family households (72.5%) than the city average (62.8%). At 79.4%, the proportion of one-family households is especially higher in the CT west of Don Mills. Both Parkway Forest CTs have a higher proportion than the overall Henry-Farm neighbourhood and the city average of multiple-family households.

Housing

There are significant differences between the Henry Farm neighbourhood and the city average in many statistical measures of housing. Whereas city averages show an almost even split between homeowners and renters, the Henry Farm neighbourhood shows one-third owning and two-thirds renting. The city average for single-family detached dwellings is 31.9%, and semi-detached and row housing combined are 15.2%, while apartment buildings with five stories and higher are at 37.6%. In the three CTs of the Henry Farm neighbourhood, only 12.7% of housing is single-family detached; row and semi-detached housing is at 13.5%, and high-rise apartments account for a significant 73.6% of all housing.

Still, the variation among the three CTs in this neighbourhood is even greater. West of Don Mills, the split is 56% owning and 44% renting; most of the renters are concentrated in a large apartment building at the southeast corner of the community. In Parkway Forest, 40% of CT 301.04 housing is owned and 60% rented. A condominium on the southwest corner at Don Mills Road and Parkway Forest Drive and townhouses on the south side of Parkway Forest Drive account for the relatively high level of ownership. In contrast, the Parkway Forest community in CT 301.03 has only 16.7% housing ownership and 83.3% rental. Moreover, in CT 301.03, there is no single-family or semi-detached housing at all, and only 5.9% row housing among all private dwellings. More than 93% of the housing stock in the central Parkway Forest community is in high-rise apartment buildings. Just over three-quarters of housing stock in the other Parkway Forest CT is made up of high-rise apartment buildings. By comparison, only 36.9% of occupied private dwellings in the Henry Farm area on the west side of Don Mills are high-rise apartments.

As a suburban community, the Henry Farm neighbourhood has housing stock that is not as old as the city average; just over half was built from 1961 to 1970 and another

37.9% came in the following decade. The higher-end residential area west of Don Mills accounts for most of the building construction in 1961-70, while the high-rise apartments and row housing in the Parkway Forest area were mostly constructed in 1971-80. Notably, several major new high-rise developments are being planned for the Parkway Forest area.[6]

At an average $991 per month, rents in the Henry Farm neighbourhood are nearly $140 per month higher than the City average rent of $852. Rents are especially high in the Parkway Forest CTs, averaging between $1,015 and $1,040. Housing costs for both owners and renters in the Parkway Forest CTs are particularly burdensome. Among renters, 47% reported paying 30% or more of household income on rent. Almost 40% of homeowners in the Parkway Forest CTs spend 30% or more on major housing payments and more than 35% make housing payments greater than 30% of their household income.

Immigration and Language

This general area is known as a reception community for new immigrants. More than half of the newcomers in the Henry Farm neighbourhood immigrated between 1996 and 2001. Another 19% of immigrants arrived in the preceding five-year period, from 1991 to 1995. The Parkway Forest CTs have an especially high recent immigrant population, with between 57.7% and 60.1% of newcomers arriving between 1996 and 2001. Even in the Henry Farm CT west of Don Mills, almost 54% of newcomers are recent immigrants who arrived between 1991 and 2001. The three largest recent immigrant groups to the area are Chinese (22.7%), Iranian (15.7%) and Pakistani (10.6%), followed by Indian, Filipino, and Romanian, all in the range of 6% to 8%. The main variation from this pattern is the area west of Don Mills, where recent immigration is made up of Romanians (24.7%), Chinese, Iranians and Filipinos (all at 11%), and Pakistanis (9.6%).

English is the mother tongue of 38% of the population in the Henry Farm neighbourhood. Major non-official languages conform to the recent immigration pattern with Chinese, Farsi, Urdu, Tagalog (Filipino) and Romanian being the top five non-official languages spoken at home. Significantly, however, more than 37% report speaking more than one language. Furthermore, the proportion of recent immigrants with no knowledge of English or French is lower than the city average and declined from 5.2% in 1996 to 3.6% in 2001.

Education

Residents are relatively highly educated in this neighbourhood. This is true for all three census tracts. While 77% of residents in the CT west of Don Mills have some college or university education, this proportion is only slightly higher than the 71% with some college or university education in the more diverse Parkway Forest area east of Don Mills. In both cases these higher education levels are weighted toward university education (about 70%). For all three CTs this level of education is significantly higher than the 56% of the whole city of Toronto with college or university education. At the lower levels of education, the Parkway Forest CTs have a higher proportion of residents with less than grade 9 (4%-5%) than the area west of Don Mills (2%).

[6] Ibid, p.17.

Income

There is wide variation above and below the average Toronto family income of $76,082 among the three CTs of this North York neighbourhood. Average family income ranges from about $42,000 in the Parkway Forest CTs to $88,540 in the Henry Farm CT, reflecting a contrast between relatively poor and affluent residential communities. Average household incomes reflect the same spread, with the Henry Farm CT average falling to $81,500 and the Parkway Forest average rising to about $46,500. The incidence of low income in the Parkway Forest CTs both among families (over 35%) and among unattached individuals (between 40% and 47%) is significantly higher than in the CT west of Don Mills (10.5% and 25% respectively) and in the city of Toronto (19.4% for families and 37.6% for unattached individuals). Notably, low-income rates for the larger Henry Farm area show a decline in the order of 7.7% for families and 6.7% for unattached individuals between 1996 and 2001.

Employment

The rate of participation in the labour force for the Henry Farm neighbourhood (67.1%) is slightly higher than the rate for the whole city of Toronto (65.3%). This difference can be attributed to a higher participation rate of 69.5% in one of the Parkway Forest CTs, 301.03. The proportion of the population 65 years and older in the other two CTs probably lowers their labour force participation rates. In 2001, the unemployment rate of 9.1% was significantly higher for the whole area than the city average of 7%. Unemployment was unevenly distributed among the three CTs, with a much lower rate west of Don Mills in the Henry Farm CT (6.3%) as compared with the Parkway Forest CTs (8.3% and 12.7%). In all three CTs, the unemployment rates among men were significantly lower than among women. Although this difference is consistent with the gender differences in the unemployment rate for the whole city, the spread was significantly higher in the three CTs that make up the Henry Farm neighbourhood.

There are variations in employment by industry among the CTs in this area. West of Don Mills, 16% of employment is in professional, scientific and technical services, which is a little more than the 12% in that industry for the Parkway Forest area. Both are higher than the 10.9% working in professional, scientific and technical services in the city of Toronto. The sector of the next highest employment rate for residents west of Don Mills is finance and insurance at 11%, which is 3.7% higher than for the city of Toronto in this industry. The other major sectors of employment for residents east of Don Mills in the Parkway Forest area are manufacturing (15.1%) and retail trade (14.3%). The latter is significantly higher than the city of Toronto average of 10.1% for employment in retail trade.

Mobility

The Henry Farm neighbourhood also has a noticeably high mobility rate compared with the city average. The 2001 census reported that more than 22% of residents moved in the previous year, compared with the city average of 14.6%. More than 60% reported moving in the previous five years. Among the three CTs, the Parkway Forest CTs had much greater turnover, with about one-quarter of residents moving in the previous year and 70% in the previous five years, compared with only 11% moving in the previous year and 32% in the previous five years for CT 301.01, between Don Mills and Leslie.

Roncesvalles

Roncesvalles, or City of Toronto Neighbourhood 86, is located in the southwest part of Toronto. It is a triangle-shaped area bounded by Queen Street West, Roncesvalles Avenue, Bloor Street West and a line that follows the railway tracks from Dufferin Street at Queen Street north to Bloor Street. In 2001, the population of Roncesvalles was 16,012. The neighbourhood includes four census tracts. (See Map 3: Roncesvalles.)

Two of the four Roncesvalles CTs have similar social, demographic and economic characteristics. A third, CT 48, has significantly higher growth rates and some differences in a few other areas, but otherwise it is relatively consistent with the other two. The fourth CT, 47.02, is quite distinct in its composition.

Population Growth and Composition

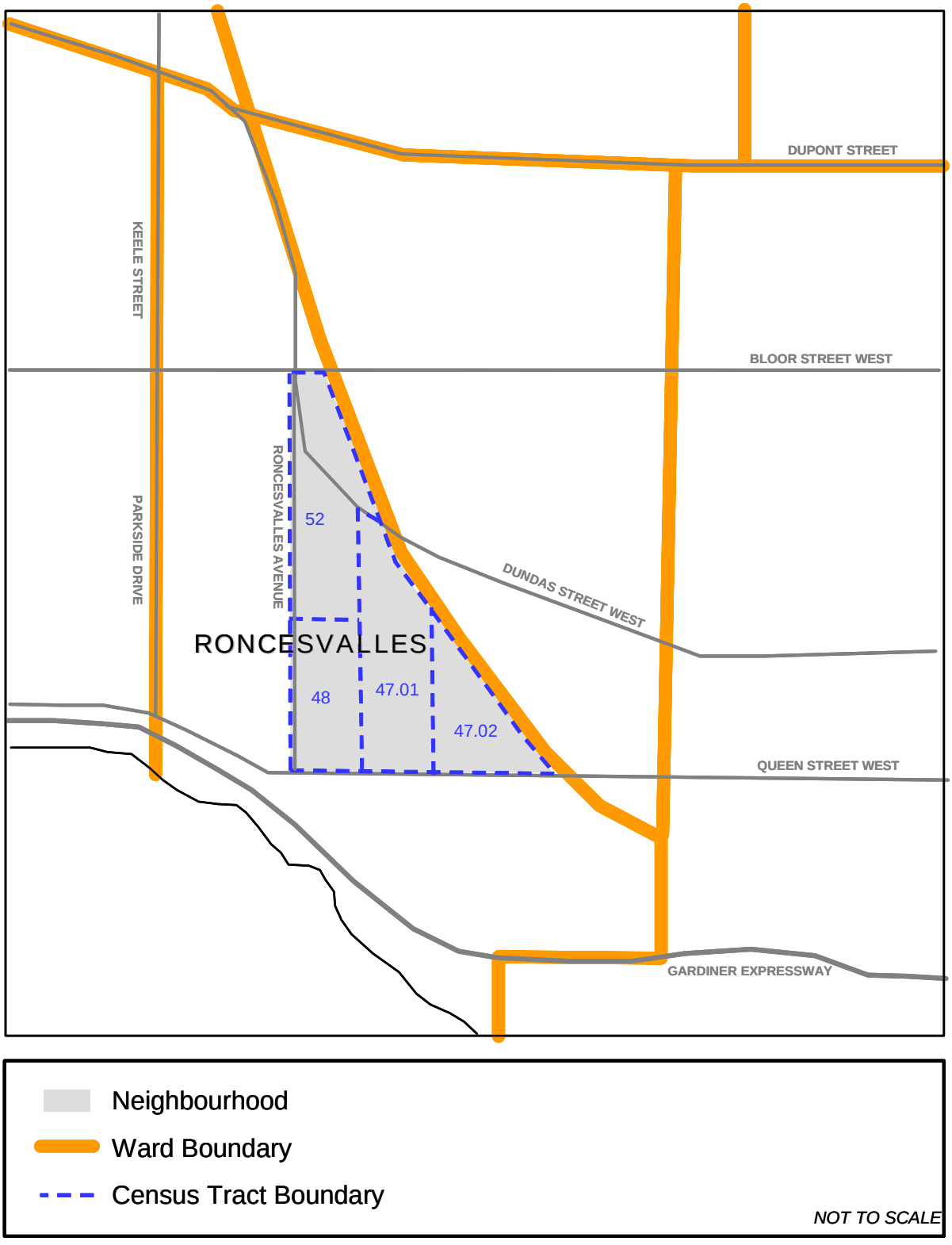
The Roncesvalles neighbourhood experienced lower than average population growth of 2.9% between 1996 and 2001, compared with the city of Toronto's growth of 4.03%. This growth occurred mostly in one Roncesvalles census tract (48), with rates lower than the average for Roncesvalles in two others and a negligible rate in the last (CT 52).

Roncesvalles has a lower proportion of children under 14 years of age than the city of Toronto average and a lower proportion of youth. About 16% of residents are 14 years and under, and 11% are between 15 and 24 years. One census tract, 47.02, has a higher proportion of children at 32%, compared with about 22% in each of the other CTs. The dependency ratio, the number of children and seniors as a percentage of the working population aged 15–64 years, is nearly 38%, which is significantly lower than the city average of 45.1%. This lower rate reflects the smaller proportion of child and senior dependants.

In the Roncesvalles neighbourhood, 20.1% of census families are lone-parent families, slightly higher than the overall city of Toronto average of 19.7%. The proportion varies from nearly 24% of families in one census tract (CT 48) to a low of 18% in another CT. Nearly 36% of married couples in Roncesvalles have no children at home. No-child households are distributed roughly equally at approximately 27% in CTs 47.01, 47.02, and 52. CT 48 has a much higher proportion of married couples with children at home; in this CT only 20% of married couples do not have children living at home.

Roncesvalles households are smaller than the city average. There is a much higher proportion of non-family households or singles in Roncesvalles (44.3%) than in the City (33.6%). The proportion ranges from a high of 49% in CT 47.02 to about 41% in two of the other CTs. There are fewer multiple-family households (2.6%) in Roncesvalles, compared with the city average of 3.6%. And 53.2% of households in Roncesvalles are one-family households, compared with the city average of 62.8%. In addition, compared with the city average of about 43%, Roncesvalles has a lower proportion of households with three or more persons, at 36.4%.

Map 3: RONCESVALLES NEIGHBOURHOOD



Housing

In the Roncesvalles neighbourhood, 60.4% of occupied private dwellings are rented and 39.6% are owned, which is somewhat different from the city average, in which the ratio of rented to owned dwellings is nearly even. Roncesvalles has significantly less single-family housing, at about 21%, than the city average of 32% and nearly double the city average of about 15% of dwelling units in semi-detached and row housing. About 49% of all housing units in the area are units in apartment buildings of five stories and higher (the city average is 37.5%), although the percentage ranges from less than 1% in one CT to over 58% in another.

In Roncesvalles in 2001, 40.2% of dwelling units were owned and 59.8% were rented. Most of the total neighbourhood renters were located in CT 47.02 (39.9%), in the West Lodge apartment buildings. In this CT about 82% of all occupied dwellings were rented and 75% of all housing units were in apartment buildings, structures of five stories or more. The other three CTs had 15% to about 24% each of the remaining renters.

Most (63%) of the neighbourhood housing stock in Roncesvalles was built before 1946. This older housing stock is about equally distributed in three of the four census tracts. The fourth CT (47.02) has newer housing, with about 45% of the total housing stock constructed in the period 1961-70. Construction of new dwelling units is extremely limited in this built-up area, with slightly less than 3% of all stock constructed since 1981.

The 2001 census recorded average gross rents from $653 to $816 in the four census tracts in Roncesvalles. These were lower than the average gross rent for the city of $852. Nonetheless, over 50% of the households in two Roncesvalles CTs spent 30% or more of their household income in gross rent payments. In the other CTs the proportions of residents who spent 30% or more were somewhat lower (40% and 37%) than the city average of about 43%. For owner households, the distribution of households spending more than 30% of household income on major housing payments was quite even across the four Roncesvalles CTs, with a range of 21% to 29% of households. The Roncesvalles average of nearly 24% was higher than the City of Toronto average of 22%.

Immigration and Language

The Roncesvalles neighbourhood has a long history of being a place where newcomers begin the process of settlement in Canada. Some newcomers have stayed in the neighbourhood for many years, while others have moved out after a much shorter settlement time. In 2001, of the 16,012 total population, 7,360 people reported the timing of their immigration. Nearly 11% of immigrants reported settling in Roncesvalles before 1961, and another 13.2% of immigrants arrived between 1961 and 1970. Increasingly larger proportions of immigrants settled in the area between 1971 and 1980 (19.1%), between 1981 and 1990 (21.9%), and between 1991 and 2001 (35%). Two census tracts have received higher proportions of new immigrants to the Roncesvalles area. In the 10 years from 1991 to 2001, CT 47.02 received over half of all immigrants and CT 48 received about 27% of total immigrants to the Roncesvalles neighbourhood.

The five largest immigrant groups to settle in Roncesvalles in the period 1996–2001 reported being from India (22%), China (17.4%), Pakistan (8.4%), the Philippines (5.2%) and Vietnam (4.9%). The remaining immigrants reported being from the United States, Poland, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, Guyana and "other" places in proportions of 4.2% or less.

The major non-official languages spoken at home in the Roncesvalles neighbourhood in 2001 were Chinese (4.14%), Polish (3.99%), Portuguese (2.64%) and Vietnamese (1.57%). Twenty-two percent reported speaking multiple languages, and Ukrainian, Tagalog, Korean, Hindi, Gujarati and Tamil were each reported at less than 1%. The proportion of recent immigrants in Roncesvalles with no knowledge of English or French declined from 8.4% in 1996 to 5.4% in 2001. This was slightly higher than the city of Toronto average. There was significant variation among CTs, from slightly over 9% of the total population in one CT having no knowledge of English or French to a low of about 3% in another CT.

Education

In 2001, 57.5% of Roncesvalles residents reported having college or university education (though not necessarily having a diploma or degree); 5.5% reported having trade certificates or diplomas; 24.1% reported having completed some or all of grades 9 to 13; and 13.0% reported less than grade 9 education. These proportions were nearly identical to those for the city. The distribution of residents in each census tract for each level of education was very similar. The exception was in CT 47.02, where the proportion of people having completed some or all of grades 9 to 13 was higher (37%) compared with the other CTs, and the proportion of population 20 years and older with some university education was lower, at 29%, than the Roncesvalles average of 38% and the city average of 36%.

Income

Average census family income in the Roncesvalles neighbourhood is $53,188, well below the city average of $76,082. Three CTs have incomes significantly above this level, ranging from $64,000 to about $70,000. The fourth CT (47.02) has an average family income of $43,000, well below the neighbourhood average and the city average. The incidence of low income among families was 21.6% for the neighbourhood (compared with 19.4% for the city), and 37.3% in the low-income census tract (47.02). The incidence of low income in the other three census tracts, between 12% and 14%, is well below the city average. The incidence of low income among unattached individuals is significantly higher for the whole neighbourhood at 47.5% (compared with 37.6% for the city), and again also much higher in CT 47.02 (63.5%) compared with the three other census tracts in Roncesvalles neighbourhood.

Employment

The average rate of participation in the labour force for the Roncesvalles neighbourhood of about 69% is higher than the city average of 65.3%. There is a range of rates across the four CTs from 62% to 74%, with participation rates lowest in the low-income CT (47.02). In 2001, the unemployment rate of 6.6% for the Roncesvalles neighbourhood was close to the overall rate of unemployment for the city of 7%. The unemployment rate varied between CTs from a high of 7.8% in the low-income CT to 5.6%. The unemployment rates for men (6%) in Roncesvalles were lower than those for women (7.5%).

In the Roncesvalles neighbourhood, 11.6% of the labour force over 15 years old is employed in professional, scientific or technical services, a proportion similar to the city average of 10.9%. Another 13.4% of the labour force is employed in manufacturing jobs, compared with the city average of 14.5%. The low-income CT has a different occupation pattern than the other CTs. It has much higher proportions of residents employed in manufacturing, retail, accommodation and food, and administrative support occupations. The higher-income CTs has higher proportions engaged in finance, professional, information and culture, and education occupations.

Mobility

The Roncesvalles neighbourhood has higher mobility rates, compared with the city average. The 2001 census reported that nearly 17% of residents moved in the previous year, compared with the City average of 14.6%. A somewhat larger proportion of Roncesvalles residents also reported moving in the previous five years (47%), compared with 45.5% across the whole city. Among the four CTs in Roncesvalles, CT 47.02 had somewhat greater turnover (51% for the five-year mobility rates) compared with the others, which were at or slightly below the city average.

Woburn

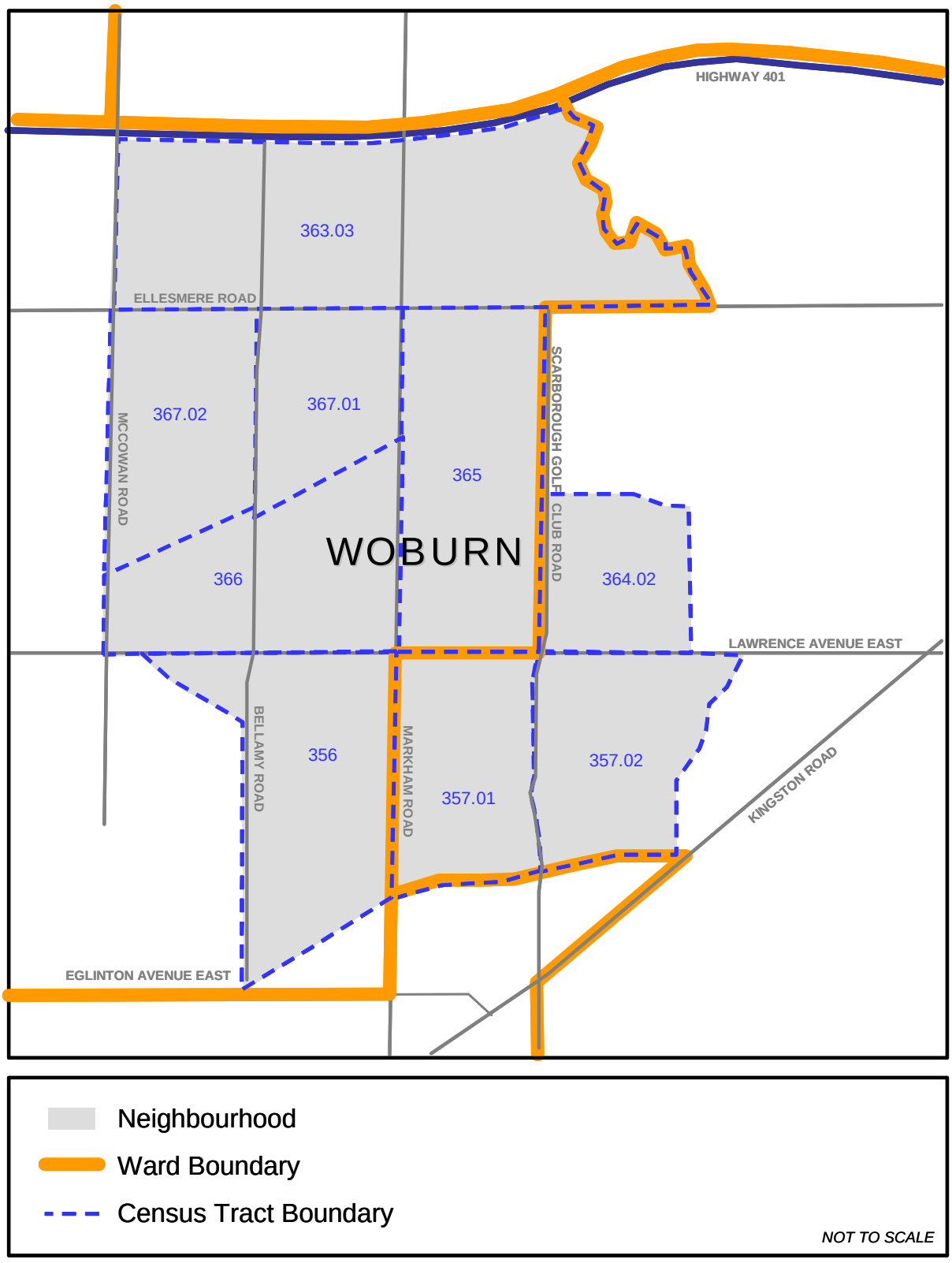
As noted earlier, Woburn is a very large and diverse neighbourhood covering nine census tracts and including over 51,000 residents. (See Map 4, Woburn.)

The Woburn neighbourhood is bounded on the north by Highway 401 and on the south by the CN rail line. The western boundary is uneven, beginning at McCowan Road from the 401 to Lawrence Avenue West, then along the West Highland Creek and Bellamy Road to the CN line. The eastern boundary begins with the East Highland Creek, then goes along Ellesmere Road, south down Scarborough Golf Club Road to Brimorton Drive, where it turns east to Orton Park Road. At Orton Park the boundary line goes south to Lawrence where it goes slightly east to link again with the East Highland Creek.

The Woburn neighbourhood does not fit neatly within any of the political ward or riding boundaries. The City of Toronto ward boundaries are consistent with the federal and provincial riding boundaries which cut through the Woburn neighbourhood. They are shown on Map 4. About a quarter of the neighbourhood of Woburn is in Scarborough East (City Ward 43, Scarborough East provincial/federal riding) while the rest is part of the much larger Scarborough Centre (City Ward 38 and Scarborough Centre provincial/federal riding). The area immediately south of the Woburn neighbourhood is in a third ward and riding.

Perhaps because of its size, distinct sub-areas based on shared or similar characteristics can be identified among the nine Woburn census tracts. These areas tend to reflect the significant differences in income in Woburn: for example, three census tracts have very low average incomes, three are higher-income, and two have generally higher incomes than the Woburn average. One census tract is in transition, with elements of both lower and higher incomes. This significant variation and the distinct income-based areas are mirrored in the analysis of other variables, like type

Map 4: WOBURN NEIGHBOURHOOD



of housing, housing tenure, immigration, education and occupation, which are discussed in the following description of the Woburn neighbourhood.

The Woburn neighbourhood is composed of established and newer residents. Established residents tend to be older, living in single-family houses and of European background. By contrast, the newer residents tend to be recent immigrants settling in the Woburn area, either as a transition point or permanently. They tend to be younger than the established population and live in rental, often high-rise accommodation.

The diversity of the Woburn neighbourhood is illustrated in the following discussion of specific socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

Population Growth and Composition

Woburn is a rapidly growing neighbourhood. It grew by 9.7% between 1996 and 2001. This is significantly higher than the city of Toronto's average population growth of 4.03% over the same period. The annual rate of growth was 1.88%, compared with 0.79% for the city.

Woburn has a younger population than the city of Toronto average. About 21.5% of Woburn residents are children, 14 years and younger, compared with 17.5% for the city. Woburn has close to the average proportion of youth and seniors and has about 6.5% fewer working-age residents (between 25 and 64 years old) than the city of Toronto average. This means that the smaller proportion of working-age residents must support a higher number of dependent children 14 years old and younger. The neighbourhood dependency ratio of 52.6% is significantly higher than the city average of 45.1%. This means that Woburn has a lower proportion of employed population compared with dependent children and senior population groups. Woburn has more "larger" households, with three or more household members, and fewer one- and two-person households than the city of Toronto average.

More families in Woburn are single-parent families (21.6%) than the city of Toronto average of 19.7%. Within the nine Woburn CTs, the proportion of single-parent families ranges significantly from 15% to about 34%.

Woburn has a greater proportion of single-family households, 72.3%, than the city of Toronto average of 62.8%. It also has a significantly higher proportion of multiple-family households (separate households sharing an address) than the city average (6.2% compared with 3.6% for the city).

Housing

While 48% of all households in the Woburn neighbourhood own their homes, the proportion of owners ranges from one Woburn CT with 91% owners to another with 31% of households owning their homes. The variation is quite significant for renters as well. In Woburn overall, 52% of households rent their dwellings, but there is a range from 9% to 69% among the nine CTs. Four CTs with lower income levels showed a much higher rate of rental tenure than the other CTs.

About 30% of all dwellings in Woburn were built between 1946 and 1960; a further 36% were built between 1961 and 1970; and 15.5% were built between 1971 and 1980. In general, the older housing tends to be single-family houses located in the

higher-income CTs. The newer housing built between 1961 and 1980 tends to be located in the lower-income CTs. Up to 92% of all housing in these areas is in apartments over five stories. By contrast, one of the high-income CTs has about 93% single-family housing and only 7% of the occupied private dwellings in apartments over five stories. The Woburn neighbourhood as a whole consists of 43% single-family dwellings and 47% apartments over five stories.

In the five years between 1996 and 2001 there was an increase in the proportion of apartment dwellings over five stories, reflecting the condominium boom occurring across Toronto. Over this period, the proportion of single-family detached houses remained constant.

Average monthly rents in Woburn vary among the CTs from $658 to $1,063. The Woburn average is $752 and the city of Toronto average is $852. Not surprisingly, the lower-rent CTs are also the low-income CTs. About 47% of tenants spend more than 30% of their income on housing, compared with 23% of owners. This varies from CT to CT, with the low-income CTs spending much higher proportions of their income on rent. This is despite the fact that Woburn has nearly twice the number of households sharing an address, and presumably sharing the rent, as in the city of Toronto as a whole.

Immigration and Language

Of the total immigrants in the Woburn neighbourhood, about 57% immigrated between 1991 and 2001, and 76% immigrated in the 20 years between 1981 and 2001. As immigrants make up over 50% of the total Woburn population, increases of this proportion in such a short period are significant. Some CTs in Woburn have undergone even more rapid change; one CT received over 72% of its immigration between 1991 and 2001. This CT tends to have some indicators of low income as well as some characteristics of more moderate-income CTs, suggesting it is in a state of transition and change. The three low-income CTs received more than the average proportion of immigrants over this 10-year period.

Between 1996 and 2001, immigrants to Woburn came from the following countries: India (26.9%), Sri Lanka (16.9%), China (11.6%), Pakistan (5.4%) and less than 5% each from Bangladesh, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Yugoslavia, Guyana and Afghanistan. They did not settle evenly throughout the Woburn community but tended to concentrate in certain CTs based on country of origin. Four of the nine Woburn CTs received more than 75% of all immigrants in this five-year period.

Slightly over 49% of Woburn residents reported that English is their mother tongue, lower than the City of Toronto average of 51.8%. The rate ranged from 30% in one Woburn CT to 68% in another CT. Lower income CTs had fewer residents who reported that English is their mother tongue. Woburn residents reported their mother tongue in 2001 as follows: Tamil (9.4%), Gujarati (5.8%), and less than 5%, Chinese, Cantonese, Tagalog, Greek, Urdu, Persian (Farsi), and Bengali. Lower income CTs tend to be more diverse in terms of mother tongue than the higher income CTs.

On average, about 4.5% of Woburn residents had no knowledge of English or French in 2001, an increase of 0.3% over the 1996 level but below the city of Toronto average of 5.1%. Like the other variables, lack of knowledge of official languages

varied considerably among the nine Woburn CTs, from a low of 0.9% in one CT to a high of 8.5% in another. Two of the three low-income CTs reported high levels, while the third had 2.4%, significantly below the Woburn and city average. The "transition" CT recorded a higher than average proportion of residents with no knowledge of either official language.

Education

The Woburn neighbourhood is somewhat better educated at the lower levels of formal education than the City of Toronto average, but significantly fewer Woburn residents have a university education than the city average. About 44% of the population has education up to grade 13, compared with about 37% for the city of Toronto. Woburn residents are somewhat more likely to have trades education than Toronto residents overall. Slightly over 47% of Woburn residents have college or university education, compared with the city average of 56%.

Across census tracts, there is significant variation in education levels. For example, about 17% of the population over the age of 20 has less than grade 9 education in one CT, exceeding the 14% of the CT population that has some university education. By comparison, in two CTs about 37% of the population over 20 years old has university education. Interestingly, one of the two high-university-level CTs was identified in the United Way's *Poverty by Postal Code* report as among the 50 lowest-income CTs in Toronto. This CT is a settlement area for recent immigrants, highlighting the challenge that well educated immigrants face in obtaining employment commensurate with their qualifications. The second CT is a mixed CT, with moderately high incomes and very high incidence of low income.

Income

The average census family income in Toronto in 2001 was $76,082. The average 2001 family income in Woburn was $53,283, nearly 29% below the Toronto average. Within the Woburn neighbourhood, there were large variations in income levels by census tract. Three CTs fell below the Woburn average income by between 17% and 23% and below the Toronto average by 42% to 46%. Even the highest-income CT in Woburn was about 4% lower than the city of Toronto average income level, although this CT was significantly above the Woburn average, by 37%. There was some clustering of CTs at the bottom (three CTs) and at the top (two or three CTs) and an income range from 23% below the Woburn average to 37% above the average, suggesting a high degree of income segregation. The income analysis was repeated for Woburn household incomes, with similar results.

The incidence of low income for private households mirrors the findings from the census family income analysis. The proportion of families identified as low-income is 22.6% in the city of Toronto and 28.6% in Woburn. There are three CTs with a very high incidence of low income that exceed the Woburn average (of 28.6%) by 10% to 18%. These three CTs were identified by the United Way in *Poverty by Postal Code* as among the 50 lowest-income census tracts in Toronto. Five additional Woburn CTs are somewhat below the Woburn and city of Toronto averages. The final CT is nearly equal to the Woburn average but below the city rate.

The average rate discussed above can be recalculated for economic families and for unattached individuals with similar results. In Woburn, as elsewhere, the incidence of

low income for non-family persons is higher than the incidence for economic families. In both cases, the Woburn rates are higher than the city of Toronto rates, and the clustering of three or four CTs at the low end of the rate and two or three CTs at the high end is also consistent.

There is much less variation in the proportion of income from employment and from government transfers in the nine CTs. The largest difference in type of income is in the "other" category, including income from investments and interest, where the proportion ranges from 6.3% to 15.5% in the Woburn CTs. Lower-income CTs have a lower proportion of their income from other income sources.

Employment

The census records occupations for people ages 15 and over who are attached to the labour force. It shows that significantly more residents of Woburn are employed in manufacturing-related occupations (20.8%) than the city of Toronto average (14.5%). Somewhat more Woburn residents are employed in administration and support, waste management and remediation services (7.1%, compared with the 5.3% city average) and in retail (11.8%, compared with 10.1% for all Toronto residents). Somewhat fewer residents are employed in information and cultural industries (3.5%, compared with 4.8%); in education (4.3%, compared with 6%); and in arts, entertainment and recreation (0.9% compared with 2.2%). More significantly, fewer are employed in professional, scientific and technical services (6.3% for Woburn, compared with 10.9% for all Toronto).

Like the other socio-economic indicators, the occupations of Woburn residents vary significantly from census tract to census tract. The higher-income CTs tend to have higher proportions of management, education, health care, finance and public administration occupations. The lower-income CTs in Woburn have higher proportions of manufacturing, accommodation and food, and retail occupations.

Labour force activity is measured through participation rates, employment rates and unemployment rates. The participation rate for the population over 15 years of age in Woburn is 60.8%, nearly 5% below the city of Toronto average. The 2001 unemployment rate of 8.9% in Woburn was 1.9% higher than the city average. Unemployment varied among the nine Woburn CTs from a low of 5.2% to a high of 11.9%. Consistent with most measures of unemployment, the Woburn unemployment rate was lower for males (7.1%) and higher for females (10.8%). One of the three low-income CTs identified in *Poverty by Postal Code* had a favourable unemployment rate of 5.4% for males and 9.1% for females, both of which were lower than the city average. Low wages rather than lack of employment appear to be a significant issue in this CT.

Mobility

About 15% of the total Woburn population moved in the year before the census, consistent with the city of Toronto average. As with other data sets, there was considerable variation within the nine CTs. For example, the highest one-year mobility rate was 21%, compared with the lowest CT at 8%. The five-year mobility rate for Woburn (47%) was slightly higher than the city average (45.5%). Six of the nine Woburn CTs exceeded the city average, and one CT had a rate of 68% mobility over

five years. This is the same CT that recorded the highest one-year rate. The lowest rate of 25% was in the same CT that recorded the lowest one-year mobility.

4. Neighbourhood Findings

Henry Farm

Understanding the Neighbourhood Boundaries

There was agreement among almost all key informants interviewed and all service providers, residents and business people participating in the five focus groups and the community sounding that there are two separate and distinct neighbourhoods making up City of Toronto Neighbourhood 53, Henry Farm. Key informants and focus group participants identified “Henry Farm” as falling between Leslie Street and Don Mills Road, and between Sheppard and Highway 401, which is CT 301.01. They identified the community east of Don Mills to Highway 404 between Sheppard and Highway 401 as Parkway Forest, which includes all of CT 301.03 and the portion of CT 301.04 west of Highway 404. The remainder of CT 301.04, to the east of Highway 404, is lightly populated and consists of mostly office and commercial space. Focus group participants and key informants clearly expressed a preference for the Community and Neighbourhood Services Department of the City of Toronto to define the current neighbourhood more accurately and precisely as two neighbourhoods, Henry Farm and Parkway Forest. For the purposes of this report, the Henry Farm neighbourhood as designated by the City will be referred to as the Henry Farm area and the Parkway Forest area.

Perceptions of the Neighbourhood

As previously described in the introduction to this former North York community, there are significant demographic, social and economic differences between the Henry Farm and Parkway Forest areas. Although both have relatively young family populations, Henry Farm west of Don Mills Road is a more established, economically affluent and homogeneous residential community of mostly homeowners. The population is relatively stable with very little growth. Statistically, the Parkway Forest area is a high-population, high-density, very culturally diverse community of young families living mostly in high-rise apartments. Economically, residents in Parkway Forest are struggling with lower incomes, higher unemployment and high rental housing costs. Parkway Forest is also growing in population at about one and a half times the city’s growth rate, and there is high turnover as one-quarter of the population moves into and out of the community annually. Despite the differences in population makeup and economic status, both areas have comparably well educated populations.

Focus group and community sounding participants generally agreed with the above social and economic profiles and with the noticeable differences between the Henry Farm and Parkway Forest areas.

Despite the significant differences between the two distinct areas in the Henry Farm neighbourhood, all participants expressed strongly positive views about their respective areas. Both areas are considered good places to live. In both areas, residents commented that the clear physical boundaries (arterial roads and highways) created two “enclaves,” contributing to a sense of identification with a clearly defined

geographic area. Henry Farm area participants expressed a sense of pride in home ownership and a strong sense of neighbourliness among residents, evidenced by families interacting on the street and in the school park. There was some concern that high population growth in the area might affect the pace of life and traffic, even though it is protected with limited access routes off the surrounding arterial roads.

Participants in Parkway Forest referred to it as a "walking community." There were frequent references to its family orientation, friendliness and harmony amid great cultural diversity.

There was concern in the Parkway Forest area about population growth, especially the impact of several proposed large high-rise apartment developments. Living conditions are overcrowded in old apartment buildings, which need major repairs and more regular maintenance. At the same time, residents recognized that many newcomer families come to the area as a point of first settlement to establish themselves. After doing so and improving their economic situations, they move to other neighbourhoods where they can afford to buy homes. Different views were expressed as to whether this transition settlement pattern is good or bad for building a stronger sense of neighbourhood. Some felt it was affecting the residents' ability to form a collective voice for input on issues such as the new development being proposed.

Neighbourhood Vitality Indicators

Participants in the resident focus groups identified a number of signs or indicators of a healthy and strong neighbourhood. They suggested that the level of participation in community events and in other ways for residents to connect with one another and come together was an important indicator. Local and accessible services and institutions were important, as were safety and low crime rates. They also identified the importance of a sense of community ownership to a strong neighbourhood.

Henry Farm area participants also identified low density as a good indicator. Parkway Forest participants identified the level of diversity and affordable rents as indicators of a strong neighbourhood. The business participants from Parkway Forest felt that population stability, meaning low turnover, would be a good vitality indicator.

Participants offered a range of comments on the neighbourhood vitality indicators proposed in the GHK study as well as some additional measures to expand this proposed measurement tool. Generally, they were seen as a mix of both the strengths and weaknesses of a neighbourhood. The business group felt that this could be confusing.

The proposed economic indicators seemed reasonable to the participants, although certain factors were identified that might distort them. For example, it was unclear whether multiple families in rental apartments might underreport a poverty measure based on the proportion of households paying more than 30% of household income on rent. Additional economic measures suggested by participants included the mix of homeowners and renters in the neighbourhood; the percentage of single-parent families in the neighbourhood; and employment barriers to certain populations (e.g., newcomers, disabled people).

Regarding the education indicators, discussion focused on the importance of linking the indicator of level of unemployment with a measurement of level of education. In the Parkway Forest area, for example, the higher unemployment rate seemed inconsistent with the higher level of resident education. This suggested some limitations in using these indicators or, at least, in using them independently of each other.

There was general consensus on the demographic indicators proposed. Participants felt "moved in the last year" should break out the proportion moving into and out of the neighbourhood from those who moved within it; the latter was not an unusual occurrence in the Henry Farm area. The Parkway Forest residents felt that the "moved in the last year" indicator suggested that population stability was the desirable condition for strong neighbourhoods and that a high score was a negative comment on the neighbourhood. They felt that Parkway Forest was strong despite high population turnover and mobility and that the measure needed interpretation and perhaps adjustment. Discussion on this point in the Parkway Forest service provider focus group suggested that some communities might serve as natural transition settlement areas. Local support systems should adapt to serve these transitional needs and support strong neighbourhood life within the more dynamic context of a highly transient population.

On the urban fabric indicators, participants felt that the definition of what was considered "community space" should be more precise. There was some debate among Parkway Forest participants as to whether a higher level of home ownership or a balance between home ownership and renting was the better indicator.

There were a lot of questions about the relevance of the proposed health indicators. One Henry Farm participant characterized them as "primitive" and noted the absence of any environmental health indicators. The availability of doctors and health services was identified as a more important health indicator. Parkway Forest participants felt the proportion of newcomers without health coverage would be a good indicator of whether a neighbourhood is healthy.

Most participants in all three groups felt that measures of crime are important indicators of safety. The Parkway Forest business participants stated, however, that in their experience, much crime goes unreported, so that charges per 1,000 residents would not reflect reality. There was some discussion of using youth crime rates as a measure of community safety.

Neighbourhood Strengths and Assets

There were differences in how the two distinct Henry Farm groups described neighbourhood strengths and assets.

Key informants and focus group participants in the Henry Farm area identified the people in the community and the strong sense of community as major strengths. The quality of the homes and the landscaping were noted community features. Families were described as self-reliant but able to count on their neighbours when they needed help. Residents highly valued the safety of the community as evidenced by family interaction in the streets and the use of the local school grounds as family park space. When residents were asked individually to identify the three things that they

"most valued" about the Henry Farm area west of Don Mills, the focus group responses broke down as follows, in descending order of frequency:

- strong sense of community pride and togetherness
- work of the Henry Farm Community Interest Association
- community safety and security
- proximity and access to facilities and amenities for daily living
- ready access to public transit
- value of homes and pride in home ownership in the community

Asked to identify weaknesses, Henry Farm area participants acknowledged that the connection between homeowners and renters in the community was not strong. They reported difficulty engaging renters in community life, although apartment tenants who were parents were connected to some degree through school, daycare and the local Anglican church activities. As a residential community, Henry Farm has no local commercial mall with businesses such as banks, groceries or convenience stores, so having a car is almost an essential requirement for shopping. Seniors without cars are more isolated and inconvenienced by the lack of local shopping amenities. Some key informants in the Henry Farm area also worried about youth idleness in the local school park.

Key informants and group participants identified several major neighbourhood assets in the Henry Farm area. The local school and daycare were seen as central to the neighbourhood both for the high quality educational programs and as places of community activity. The local neighbourhood association was highly valued as a vehicle for organizing community events, running social, recreational, sports and community safety programs and maintaining regular communications with residents through an e-mail network. The Anglican church located in the community but serving a much wider area was also considered a major local asset, not only for its faith services but also for its involvement in community programming (e.g., development of a youth drop-in service in conjunction with another agency) and community use of church space. The church also houses a Montessori School.

Parkway Forest participants and key informants also emphasized both the physical and the social aspects of their community as key strengths. The recognition of the community's diversity and the prevailing harmony of neighbourhood life were noted as strengths. Individually given responses to the question about the three "most valued" things about Parkway Forest produced the following grouped responses, in descending order of importance:

- access to important services, especially Forest Manor School and Parkway Forest YMCA Daycare
- a strong sense of a caring community and togetherness
- community safety
- respect for and appreciation of the neighbourhood's cultural diversity
- accessibility of transit, services and amenities for daily living
- family and child orientation of the neighbourhood
- neighbourhood cleanliness

The major local concerns about the quality of life in the Parkway Forest area centred on the growing demand for services because of population growth, especially as it

affected the local school and daycare. There was a noticeably deteriorating quality of housing in the apartment buildings, and cleanliness standards were falling in both public and private spaces. Parents worried about nighttime safety and traffic safety, especially with respect to their younger children. High population turnover made it hard to get people involved in community activities, and there was a problem with continuity in local participation. Without an organized residents' association in this area, there was no central point of responsibility for coordinating community involvement.

There was much consensus in Parkway Forest on the major locally based neighbourhood assets. The local school and daycare were considered central to community life, both for child learning and development and for a range of other community activities. Centrally located park space, including a sports utility pad constructed jointly by the City Parks and Recreation department and the Toronto District School Board, were heavily used in the warm weather seasons. A private recreation centre with a formal swimming program was used both locally and by people from outside the community. Although some found affordability an issue in using the centre, many community activities were based in its facilities. Parkway Plaza, a shopping mall with about a dozen small businesses, was valued for being within walking distance.

Key informants and residents from both the Henry Farm and the Parkway Forest areas identified major assets outside the community that they valued and used. These included St. Timothy's Catholic Elementary School, the hospital, accessible local secondary schools, the subway and bus routes, the Fairview Mall shopping centre, the Fairview Library and the Don Valley East Ontario Early Years Centre and its satellite programs. The library was valued for a variety of uses for children, youth and adults including literacy and English-language training and cultural and theatre programs. There was mixed opinion about Oriole Community Centre, some using a variety of its recreational programs and others feeling it is too distant and physically difficult to access even by public transit, especially for younger children.

Use of Neighbourhood Assets: Facilitating and Barrier Conditions

The following section considers availability, proximity, accessibility, capacity and quality, the five variables identified by this project as important to assessing and understanding the use of neighbourhood assets. They have been used to assess barriers to use of neighbourhood assets as well as facilitating conditions that encourage or support use of assets. Each is discussed separately.

Availability

The preceding section indicated that a relatively strong local asset base exists in both areas of this neighbourhood. There was agreement that the movement of a children's treatment clinic from the local hospital to Branson Hospital constituted a loss of an important community resource, especially to the local school.

Henry Farm area participants did not indicate any strong sense of need for additional locally based services or resources, although they were clear that private car ownership is necessary for grocery shopping and that this affects mostly the apartment dwellers and seniors in the community.

There was a much stronger preference among Parkway Forest residents for more locally based services in the neighbourhood, such as a free community recreation centre, child and family support services (e.g., parenting skills training) and youth activity programs. Affordable housing is needed in the Parkway Forest area, which lacks any social housing units.

Proximity

The geographic scale and the lack of internal physical barriers within the two distinct areas of the Henry Farm neighbourhood make all locally based assets within easy walking distance of all residents, with the exception of the apartment dwellers, especially seniors, in the southeast corner of the Henry Farm area.

The arterial road system that clearly delineates both neighbourhoods was seen to have both advantages and disadvantages in terms of the physical distance of residents from assets outside the specific neighbourhood areas. The major roads and regular public transit, both bus and subway, give both parts of the Henry Farm neighbourhood ready access to downtown and other parts of the city. The busy traffic on the arterial roads, however, presents some safety concerns and challenges for giving children and families access to what are otherwise relatively close resources and facilities. There are some services on the east side of Highway 404, such as the Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) and employment training and counselling agencies, that residents of Parkway Forest, in particular, considered too far away. The OEYC, however, provides regular satellite programs out of a number of sites dispersed throughout the area.

Accessibility

Many access barriers to both neighbourhood-based assets and services located in the wider community were identified. Participants from the Parkway Forest area primarily raised these issues, although ESL program cuts and reduced use of Shaughnessy Public School for community purposes were also noted by Henry Farm participants. Fees for use of the private recreation centre programs were a problem for many. Waiting lists for childcare, pre- and after-school programs and ESL programs were also major concerns. Reduced hours of operation for the Fairview Library in recent years were noted as a loss of access for local residents. Residents identified restrictive eligibility criteria for employment training supports funded by the federal government as another access barrier. Well educated immigrants had difficulty getting jobs because of lack of “Canadian experience” and also faced challenges in using employment training programs available only to applicants receiving Employment Insurance. Frustration was expressed that people lose eligibility for ESL and other settlement supports once they become citizens, since they still need these supports even if settled in Canada for four or five years.

There were also several examples of service collaboration that increased access to local assets. For example, school, daycare and Parks and Recreation partnerships provided pre- and after-school programs for families with young children. Collaboration between the Fairview Library and the community agency operating the Settlement and Education Partnerships in Toronto program allowed the SEPT worker to work part-time out of the library during the summer months to provide a continuity of educational supports to newcomer children during the summer break. At the neighbourhood sounding, the Don Valley East OEYC and the Parkway Forest YMCA

Childcare Centre announced their intention to develop a working relationship for improved programming for families in the Parkway Forest community.

Capacity

Pressure on the capacity of local assets is primarily an issue in Parkway Forest. The local school in Henry Farm is small, with several hundred students, including several classes of children with behavioural disabilities bused in from other neighbourhoods. Forest Manor School in Parkway Forest has achieved a formally recognized high standard of educational achievement despite the fact that, with 700-plus children, it was at 118% of capacity. Residents and local educators worried that further population growth would undermine the school's capacity to maintain these high standards.

ESL programs were at their limit in the face of high demand from an increasing and extremely diverse newcomer population. The availability of adequate and appropriate indoor community space for multiple community activities was also an issue in the Parkway Forest area. Capacity pressures on both physical space and program operations were expected to increase as new development brings even more people into the area.

Notably, in a community where 26% of the population is Muslim, there were no specific Muslim prayer facilities. Worship services for Muslim and other faiths used space in Forest Manor, the private recreation centre, the Oriole Community Centre and Fairview Library.

At the same time, Parkway Forest residents at the neighbourhood sounding discovered employment resource services of which they were unaware, provided by the Toronto District School Board and the federal government, in the vicinity (Yorklands Road on the east side of Highway 404), suggesting that barriers existed related to access to information about available services.

Quality

The cultural and linguistic diversity of the Parkway Forest area necessitated a highly adaptive and responsive support system. Even the business focus group participants recognized the need for adapting to the cultural makeup of the local resident base by hiring staff with certain language skills and stocking culturally specific products (e.g., certain foods). Educational and social support programs such as the school, daycare and OEYC were also highly sensitized to hiring staff with whom local residents could identify and communicate. The high turnover and varying waves of immigration on three-to-five-year cycles presented a real challenge to the adaptability and responsiveness of local support systems.

Neighbourhood Networks and Partnerships

Internally, both parts of the Henry Farm neighbourhood demonstrated high degrees of social cohesion. In the Henry Farm area, the local residents' association was clearly recognized as the leading community organization, coordinating activities and communications among primarily the residential homeowners. Association leaders reported that various attempts to engage renters in the high-rise apartment buildings and townhomes had not been very successful. The association maintained regular

contact with the community's locally elected city councillor, MPP and MP. It had a long history of political influence on issues of local concern.

There were few external partnerships between the local organizations in the Henry Farm area and external organizations. The Anglican church was more likely to be engaged in such arrangements, since its parish extends beyond the neighbourhood. For example, it was involved in a collaboration between the Anglican ministry and a community service agency to start a youth drop-in centre in the area. The Henry Farm area had no connections with the Parkway Forest area. Both communities acknowledged Don Mills Road as a clear physical boundary delimiting their separate existence and functioning.

There was no lead networking organization within the Parkway Forest area. Some residents identified this as a major problem for organizing a collective community voice on issues such as the planned new development. It was clear that the school, daycare and private recreation facility were consumed with the demands of providing daily service and support to local families. Service partnerships and coordination occurred at this level between the local schools, including St. Timothy's, and the daycare and facilities and programs outside the community such as the Oriole Community Centre and the Fairview Library. Key informants spoke of stronger coordination in previous years, when Forest Manor School employed a family resource worker who helped organize local agencies for information exchanges and joint planning. One result of this activity was a joint City and school board initiative to share property and create the sports pad in the park. Budget cuts, however, led to the elimination of this family resource position and, thus, the loss of a coordinating and joint planning role in the area.

There was no sense among Parkway Forest participants that the area had any particularly strong political influence. Focus group participants recognized that it was hard to get a high and consistent level of community engagement within such a dynamically changing and transient newcomer population.

Service provider focus group participants attributed the high degree of harmony within this transient and diverse neighbourhood to several factors. Parkway Forest is made up mostly of young families in which all parents shared a common concern about the well-being and good education of their children. Second, there was a shared need to master English, frequently done together in ESL and LINC classes, in which people from diverse cultures learn about one another. And finally, there was shared need for and understanding of the importance of getting good jobs for the economic stability and well-being of families. Thus, a bonding process occurred among the very culturally diverse residents of Parkway Forest that created community harmony and cohesion.

At the same time, service providers expressed frustration about the lack of awareness in the community about the services that do exist. They indicated multiple attempts at outreach. Residents felt that immigrants were not comfortable with services such the 211 community information number and preferred to have information available in print form, whether in their own language or in English.

Investment Priorities

There was a high degree of consistency between key informants and focus group participants in both areas on priorities for investment.

Participants from the Henry Farm area identified fewer priority areas than Forest Parkway. Henry Farm priorities included more ESL programs, especially for Chinese families moving into the community. It was noted that school budget cuts had necessitated the closing of a Saturday-morning Chinese ESL program at Shaughnessy Public School. Youth programs and facilities were also identified as a priority, although it was noted that St. Matthew's was participating in a joint Anglican ministry-JVS Toronto initiative to start a youth drop-in centre in the east Willowdale community that would be open to Henry Farm youth. The restoration of child and family counselling services recently relocated from North York General to Branson Hospital was a priority. Participants also identified the need for greater capacity to keep Shaughnessy School available for community use in the evenings and on weekends.

In the Parkway Forest area, service providers and residents most frequently identified more adequate space and facilities for community activities, especially recreation programs for families, children and youth, as a major investment priority. In general, participants recognized that all local services were operating over capacity, including the school, daycare and ESL programs. There was a need for parenting programs and youth programs and facilities. It was noted that Forest Manor School had lost the Family Resource Centre staff and a Seneca College ECE program as well because of the need to use portables for regular classes. Parkway Forest residents strongly favoured investments in local services within the neighbourhood.

Parkway Forest service providers and residents also indicated that investment should be put into the physical infrastructure in the community, since the apartment buildings were in a state of disrepair and the public and private outdoor areas in the neighbourhood were less clean than they used to be. The business focus group participants also stated the need for physical improvements, including public washrooms in the park and expanded parking in the shopping mall. They also identified the need for more police foot and car patrol coverage for Parkway Forest.

In the final neighbourhood meeting or sounding, attended by mostly Parkway Forest area residents and a number of service providers, the residents re-emphasized *local* services and support groups for children, youth, families and adults as "the most pressing need." They also identified a community health centre and an Internet café, where residents could use the Internet but also socialize and break down isolation, as "pressing needs."

Service providers felt the most pressing needs for investment were improved communications and coordination among agencies and with the wider community and more community space for a range of programs and activities.

A common issue with major implications for social investments expressed in both areas was new proposed high-rise building developments, which would lead to even greater population growth. There was a suggestion that this might be an issue that could bring both areas together in common cause, as both agreed on the need for

community input into the planned development. Henry Farm area residents were primarily concerned about the disruption to the peace and calm of their community with both density and traffic increasing. Parkway Forest service providers and residents felt that local services and facilities were already stretched beyond their limits and could not bear increased demands without resources for service expansion and facility upgrades. Parkway Forest residents reiterated the need for a community organization, which would give the community some voice on such neighbourhood changes.

Roncesvalles

Understanding the Neighbourhood Boundaries

None of the participants wholly agreed with the City's defined boundaries for the Roncesvalles neighbourhood. Most felt the western boundary should extend further west to Parkside Drive, although a few felt the western boundary should be Sunnyside Avenue. Many participants said they experienced the Roncesvalles neighbourhood as two distinct neighbourhoods, Roncesvalles Village to the northwest and Parkdale to the southeast. Those from the north and west generally had no difficulty with Queen Street being the southern boundary. A few thought that the southern boundary should be Lake Ontario, and that this whole much larger area should be called Parkdale. One participant wanted the definition of Parkdale to encompass the area from Bloor Street to Lake Ontario and from Parkside Drive to Sorauren Avenue.

Participants who lived or worked in the southeast part of the defined area felt that using Queen Street as the southern boundary cut the "main street" and the neighbourhood in half. Because of this, some recommended that either Lake Ontario or Marion Street be used as the southern neighbourhood boundary. Most participants agreed that the train tracks which run diagonally from Dufferin Street at Queen Street north to Dundas Street West formed an appropriate eastern boundary, although several commented that other roads like Lansdowne Avenue, Macdonell Avenue or Dovercourt Road would be more appropriate eastern boundaries.

Perceptions of the Neighbourhood

Participants said their neighbourhood is a good place to live and do business. They described Roncesvalles as diverse in ethnicity, age, and types of skills and employment. The neighbourhood was said to be home to single families, traditional and mixed families, stay-at-home dads, artists, gay and lesbian families, rich and poor people, some who are overeducated and some who are underemployed.

The northwest part of Roncesvalles was described as being more affluent than the southeast part. The northwest part was described as being more homogeneous, as having more people of eastern European heritage, more homeowners and more large, single-family dwellings, and as changing its composition from being a largely Polish neighbourhood to a neighbourhood where many middle- and higher-income white professionals with young families were settling. As well this area was described as increasingly becoming the home and workplace of artists. Housing in that part of the neighbourhood was being renovated and gentrified, and housing prices were rising dramatically. The area west of Lansdowne Avenue was described as being

populated with many people who were environmentally conscious and active; many chose to use the public transit system, for example, rather than driving a car. As well, this area was described as becoming politically more liberal or “left” with the shift in the population composition over the last five years.

In the southeast part of Roncesvalles, the neighbourhood tends to be more ethnically diverse, with people who are Turkish, South Asian, Tibetan and Latin American, with lower-income residents, and more people experiencing the struggles of settlement, underemployment or unemployment. The housing stock in the southeast part of the neighbourhood was described as having more high-rise rental units, some of which are very badly maintained, as well as a mix of smaller single-family dwellings, as well as semi-detached and row housing. The area east of Lansdowne Avenue was described as suffering from neglect. It was seen as an area with more health, safety and economic problems.

There are two main business districts in Roncesvalles and two Business Improvement Associations. Roncesvalles Avenue was described as the “main street” and the main business area in the northwest part of the neighbourhood. The businesses are primarily located on the east side of Roncesvalles Avenue, apparently because historically the neighbourhood on the west side of Roncesvalles, a “white-collar” neighbourhood, kept itself separate from the “blue-collar” neighbourhood on the east side of the street. This affected the zoning and restricted the development of the business district to the east side of Roncesvalles Avenue. In recent years, businesses have opened on the west side of Roncesvalles, but to this day the greater proportion of business is on the east side. The business community along Roncesvalles was described as vibrant and diverse, featuring food stores, markets, hardware stores, banks, butcher shops, restaurants and a cinema. The shops on Roncesvalles Avenue were described as increasingly upscale and increasingly of a chain-store type that was moving in and filling up rental retail space that was no longer affordable or available to small-business owners as members of the Polish business community retire.

Participants described Queen Street as a “main street” in the south part of the neighbourhood that is vibrant on some blocks and struggling on others. Even though there are more new businesses setting up on Queen Street, the business mix was described as not diverse enough to meet the shopping needs of the people who live nearby, and as not having enough “feature” or “anchor” shops to draw a wider customer base into the neighbourhood. The appearance of the shops along Queen Street was described as steadily improving, although there was also mention of many storefronts that were less attractive. The shops along Queen Street were described as clustered by type; for example, there is a cluster of antique shops and another cluster of fabric shops.

The two main streets were also described as different in the number of social service agencies they house, with Queen Street having a very high concentration of services. Several research participants noted that the characters of the shopping areas on Queen Street and Roncesvalles Avenue give each of the two areas their identity and influence the type of street life, feelings of safety and general vitality that each area experiences.

The whole area was described with positive terms like friendly, welcoming, interesting, “edgy” and having a strong “community feel.” The area was also described as having a lot of locally active residents. At the same time, it was acknowledged that many people in the community are isolated because of language barriers and economic barriers and that many of these people do not have the capacity to be active or have a voice as members of their community. The southeast part of the Roncesvalles neighbourhood was highlighted as losing out because it was less strong, not developing and unable to advocate for itself. Some participants noted that at night residents may not feel safe on the streets, particularly in the southeast part of the neighbourhood, where prostitution, drug dealing and abuse were more commonly seen.

Neighbourhood Vitality Indicators

Participants identified signs or indicators of a healthy and strong neighbourhood. Several of the signs related to the business area of the neighbourhood, including new businesses and restaurants moving to the neighbourhood, fast turnover of vacant retail space, a well-rounded mix of businesses and the presence of small and locally owned businesses rather than chain stores. Participants felt that quick sales of housing, houses selling for higher than the asking price, renovations, the presence of affordable housing and a homeowner-to-renter ratio of 40:60 were important signs of a healthy neighbourhood. Other signs noted were the presence of lots of young families, clean streets, positive street life (e.g., pedestrians, shoppers, skateboarders) and events or activities that support connecting, settlement, and working together.

Participants reviewed and commented on the proposed neighbourhood vitality indicators. Many participants emphasized that measures of diversity along a variety of dimensions were important but that there was a need for a more well-rounded set of measures for each indicator. They also noted that the indicators seemed negative, measuring the absence of vitality. Participants noted that they preferred more positive measures. It was questioned whether one set of indicators would work for all neighbourhoods, and whether there needed to be a way to include neighbourhoods in selecting appropriate measures that balanced the need for consistency of assessment with the recognition of neighbourhood uniqueness. Some questioned whether a single measure alone was adequate to assess strength. For example, it was noted that a measure of diversity without measures of income, settlement supports and English-language ability did not adequately assess neighbourhood strength.

The participants generally felt the indicators of neighbourhood economy were fine but that additional measures were needed, such as mix of business types, mix of residential and business, and the ratio of entrepreneurial private businesses to chain stores. Other proposed measures included ratio of local shopping to shopping out of the neighbourhood, presence of local credit unions which support community investment, availability of jobs for teenagers and length of stay of employees in local workplaces. Two other measures were suggested that link to economy: ratio of people using social services compared with those who did not, and local investment compared with investment by stockholders, absentees or boardroom-type investors.

In response to the education indicators, participants commented that the measures should assess the balance or mix of types of employment skills, the mix of education

levels and access to education (including affordability and support to overcome language barriers). Participants felt the literacy measure was an important measure of vitality.

Participants generally thought the demographics measures were fine but suggested expanding the immigration measure to something broader that would assess the diversity of cultures in the community, as well as the number (or proportion) of new immigrants. They also suggested expanding the scope of the "moved in the last year" measure to assess the varying lengths of time people have lived or worked in the community. The measure called "no knowledge of English or French" was questioned, in that the "French" part of this measure might not be realistic; a newcomer to Toronto who speaks only French will face many of the same communication barriers that other non-English-speaking people experience. Finally, participants recommended that measures related to age diversity, marital status and language groups be added to the list.

In the urban fabric group, many participants felt "dwellings needing major repair" was too narrow a measure. Some participants said that the ratio of those dwellings needing major repair to those not needing repair might be more helpful. A couple of participants suggested that a measure of the ratio of stores in need of "minor" repairs (referring to the appearance of storefronts) compared with those that are in good repair and attractive would be helpful. A broad range of other measures were suggested for inclusion in the urban fabric indicator related to community engagement and participation, including the number of secular community events, a measure of "what's missing" from the community to show what people look for outside the neighbourhood, presence or absence of well-functioning tenants' and residents' associations and number of people active on local issues. Other proposed measures related to movement and included proximity to public transit and presence of bike lanes. Participants thought there should be measures related to facilities and services, like a ratio of schools, institutions, residences and businesses to the neighbourhood population; the number of schools (a sign that the neighbourhood can renew itself with a younger population); and the presence or absence of barriers (e.g., user fees) to use of community services and facilities. Finally, they identified measures of urban form, including the proportions of different types of housing (e.g., tenure, type, form), and the number of front porches, ice rinks, parks and other gathering spaces per capita.

The proposed health measures were described as being too narrow in relation to the concept of health, and not descriptive of the health of a whole neighbourhood. Participants recommended adding measures such as the presence of health services (e.g., community health centres, walk-in clinics), rates of cancers, availability of food, fertility rate, mortality rate and sense of possibility (sense of a future and hope).

Some of the participants commented that the measures of safety were really measures of danger. A combination of "safety" and "danger" measures was proposed for inclusion in this indicator, including police statistics about family abuse, police statistics about female spouses' access to household money, the presence or absence of a Neighbourhood Watch and police on foot patrol, the number of traffic accidents and whether outdoor public spaces had good lighting.

Several participants suggested that there should be a "green/environmental" indicator, with measures of green space, factory emissions and air quality. As well, it was suggested that a "social inclusion" indicator be added and that it include measures of social contact with neighbours and other forms of social engagement.

Neighbourhood Strengths and Assets

When asked about the strengths of the Roncesvalles neighbourhood, participants routinely noted its diverse population. One person cautioned that diversity was not a strength when there were not adequate supports to allow all people to participate and live fully. Many people noted that proximity to High Park and Lake Ontario was a strength. The value of this "strength" was questioned, as there seemed little, if any, benefit to the Roncesvalles neighbourhood of the many events which drew thousands of people annually to Lake Ontario and the Canadian National Exhibition. For many residents, spending time by the lake or in High Park was not possible because of their life circumstances and the considerable distance some would need to travel.

Participants noted the strong political and environmental commitment of residents as a strength. As well, they noted the availability of affordable rental housing, two strong residents' associations, two active business associations, easy access to good public transportation, the many beautiful old houses and the large numbers of trees as community strengths. Several participants noted there was a strong sense of community, though some participants noted that some parts of the neighbourhood were inclusive but that others seem to have a "NIMBY" (not in my backyard) attitude.

Participants were asked to identify the three things they valued most about the Roncesvalles neighbourhood. They are listed in descending order of frequency:

- diversity of people's ethnicity, age, language, economic status and education
- proximity to Lake Ontario and High Park and small parks; community engagement, participation, connectedness and pride; and small-town feeling, sense of community, community spirit (equal numbers of responses)
- good balance of shops, businesses, services, galleries, antique stores, restaurants; multiple health organizations (e.g., PARC [Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre], Parkdale Community Health Centre, Sistering); excellent access to public transit; uniqueness of the business community; and access to community amenities (equal numbers of responses)
- mix of housing stock, including older houses and proximity to downtown
- access to highways; neighbourhood beauty; young families; lots of local schools; strong arts and music community; safety; and population density

The challenges or weaknesses noted by participants included social disadvantage, prostitution and drug activity. Many people in the neighbourhood did not own a car, for either environmental or economic reasons. They saw a challenge in making the neighbourhood accessible and user-friendly for Rollerbladers, cyclists and pedestrians, especially with the car traffic and the ongoing need for more parking. Participants identified a need for cultural and recreation facilities, such as a new recreation centre on Wabash Avenue, a theatre on Queen Street and a town square on Queen Street that would support the neighbourhood to come together and would attract people and enliven the streets. Some buildings were identified as needing

significant repairs, including St. Vincent de Paul Church and many of the rental retail buildings, especially on Queen Street.

It was noted that the neighbourhood will be challenged to retain its small-town uniqueness as more chain stores move into the area. Others noted weaknesses or challenges included gentrification and the impact of rising housing prices on the affordability of the neighbourhood and the need to protect those qualities that give the area its sense of community. While neighbourhood diversity was described as a strength, challenges were identified in running a school where the children speak 64 languages, with settlement services when there are not enough supports, or when crack addicts or people with mental health issues and young children attend the same church.

Participants identified several major neighbourhood assets, including the Parkdale Public Library and the High Park Library, the Polish Credit Union, the parks, a mosque, local churches, hubs of information such as Alternative Grounds Coffee Shop, Copernicus Lodge, the assortment of local businesses, cafés and bars, Fern Avenue Public School, and Parkdale Public School and Recreation Centre.

Other important assets near the neighbourhood but not located within the defined neighbourhood boundaries are St. Joseph's Health Centre, Four Villages Health Centre, PARC, Keele Community Centre, Parkdale Community Centre, High Park and Lake Ontario, Bowman Dance School, Masaryk-Cowan Recreation Centre, Humberside Collegiate and Parkdale Collegiate.

Use of Neighbourhood Assets: Facilitating and Barrier Conditions

The following section discusses five variables - availability, proximity, access, capacity and quality - that determine the value of the neighbourhood asset base in Roncesvalles.

Availability

Generally participants were pleased with the availability of assets either within or near their neighbourhood. However, many noted the need for a recreation centre and identified a site on Wabash Avenue where residents hoped a recreation centre would be built. Some noted the need for continued business development along Queen Street to increase the availability and range of goods and services. Participants also noted that while there were multiple gathering places in Roncesvalles, there was a need for a central community hub. People in the northwest part of Roncesvalles saw the hoped-for recreation centre on Wabash Avenue as a major hub, while people in the southeast part of Roncesvalles identified a "town square."

Proximity

Many of the facilities and services and businesses in the Roncesvalles neighbourhood are within a walkable distance from residential parts of the neighbourhood. Where distances are too long to walk, access to public transit is convenient and close. Access to public transit is excellent, and major highways that allow for travel to other cities are nearby. As noted earlier, proximity to a full range of shopping facilities is limited in the southeast part of the neighbourhood.

Accessibility

Participants identified a range of barriers to accessing services and facilities in the Roncesvalles neighbourhood. Among them are the snow-covered sidewalks that, in several places, are not cleared either by homeowners or by the City. As well the sidewalks on Roncesvalles Avenue in some places have two levels and several stores have steps at their front doors. These features decrease accessibility, especially for people with baby carriages or those who use wheelchairs.

User fees were noted as an accessibility issue for low-income families in the neighbourhood, as were reduced hours of service at the Recreation Centre that is part of Parkdale Public School. Reduced access and administrative permit procedures were identified as barriers to using school space. Language barriers and sometimes cultural barriers limited access to community events or to participation in community-wide programs and services. The cost of public transit was identified as a barrier for some people in accessing assets outside the immediate Roncesvalles neighbourhood. Several participants noted the importance of having local assets available within walking distance. One person noted that when local assets had a welcoming image, people would use them more.

The presence of drug dealers and other “rough characters” was said to make people stay at home, especially at night. Several participants noted that Masaryk-Cowan Recreation Centre, just south of Queen Street, is an important asset for the community. However, some members of the community were uncomfortable passing by the large number of teenagers who hang out by the main doors of the building.

Health services in the neighbourhood were said to be generally very accessible, although language was sometimes a barrier to access. The Children’s Aid Society did not have a satellite office in the area, making access difficult. Housing stock was described as getting more expensive and therefore less accessible.

Capacity

Participants identified a variety of capacity concerns in the Roncesvalles neighbourhood. Parking along Queen Street and along Roncesvalles Avenue was not seen as sufficient. Also, the neighbourhood was described as not having enough park space. Participants commented that social service agencies did not have enough capacity to meet the demand for service. This was evident in comments about the high demand and low capacity (i.e., long waiting lists) to provide home supports, especially culturally specific ones, and the absence of programs and services for the newest newcomer groups (e.g., Tibetans and a new influx of Somalis). Youth employment services were described as insufficient to meet demand.

Quality

In Roncesvalles, the quality of assets was rarely mentioned as a barrier or as a facilitating condition. Issues with the quality of services had more to do with the match of appropriate services to the neighbourhood’s needs: for example, the lack of newcomer services for the new wave of Somali or Tibetan people. Quality was also alluded to in relation to the nature and assortment of businesses on Roncesvalles Avenue and Queen Street, as noted earlier.

Neighbourhood Networks and Partnerships

The Roncesvalles neighbourhood has a number of active local associations and networks, including tenants' associations, business associations, service provider networks and special project collaborations and partnerships. Generally, the service networks include organizations with large catchment areas including the Roncesvalles neighbourhood.

The Roncesvalles neighbourhood was seen as well connected and able to organize effectively and quickly on local issues. Special-issue organizing, for example, resulted in the development of local action groups such as the Ward 14 Problem Properties Taskforce and West Enders for Local Democracy (which fought against the amalgamation of Metropolitan Toronto's six municipalities). In addition, the Parkdale Community Information Centre was seen as an excellent resource for supporting linkages within the community.

Investment Priorities

Participants identified a range of investment priorities for the Roncesvalles neighbourhood.

The final community meeting or sounding was attended mainly by residents but included some service providers and members of the business community. Participants talked about the need for investment discussions to start with an assessment of what community groups were already doing that showed promise for strengthening the community. They wanted to build on current initiatives and activities through an inclusive community think-tank type of process.

One investment priority identified by participants related to the development of a neighbourhood focal point. Some participants proposed a new community recreation centre on Wabash Avenue that would function as a cultural and recreation hub for the community. Others described a town square on or near Queen Street that would be a gathering place where residents could connect and build relationships and where community events could be hosted. Both were seen as foundational to other community development.

Affordable housing and services for youth were also identified as investment priorities by the participants.

Many services were described as being chronically underfunded. One person estimated that some organizations had about 20% of what they needed to respond effectively to community need. Therefore, investing in existing services was seen as an investment priority. Three main areas for broad public investment were identified as education, housing and health care.

Outreach and settlement services for the newest of newcomers (Somalis and Tibetans) were identified as a priority for Roncesvalles. Participants identified the need for services to go beyond crisis intervention and provide a bridge to independent living for abused women and children, people with disabilities and people with mental illness. They identified the need for more home support services, especially to support the culturally and linguistically diverse population; intergenerational programming and social and recreational services for seniors were

also discussed. Participants proposed youth services, including employment services; services for sex trade workers; settlement supports for newcomers, including greater multilingual communication and an accreditation system for foreign-trained professionals.

Proposed physical infrastructure investments included more parking spots on and near Queen Street and Roncesvalles Avenue and facade beautification along Queen Street and Roncesvalles Avenue. Participants spoke of the need to invest in more park space and more child-friendly space. Car traffic was identified as a concern, and a plan to address the multiple adverse effects of car traffic was identified as an investment priority. Participants felt that urban and social planning should be more effective at distributing services more evenly across the city (rather than being so heavily concentrated in Roncesvalles). A range of other ideas were proposed that included development of a new local market, tearing down the Gardiner Expressway and rejuvenating Queen Street, and legislation to ensure that landlords improve and maintain their properties. Street cleaning, related snow and garbage removal and improvements to the condition of poorly maintained apartment buildings were proposed.

Roncesvalles-specific investments mentioned included the promotion and celebration of Roncesvalles in city-wide communications and the development of a website to celebrate the neighbourhood. Participants also proposed “something” (not named) that would give newcomers a reason to stay in the community and become part of the community.

A strategic approach to supporting investment over the long term was proposed as part of the discussion about investment priorities. Specifically, it was recommended that there be an inclusive coordinating structure within the neighbourhood to support the local investment activity and at the same time link the local strategy to municipal, provincial or federal investment strategy, thereby ensuring sustainability. Community development capacity was identified as a need: investing in people to bring people together and foster community innovation. Community leadership was seen as an important community resource that needed a mechanism or structure for “containing” or “incubating” that energy.

Woburn

Understanding the Neighbourhood Boundaries

The name “Woburn” did not mean anything to the stakeholders consulted as part of the research process. The most frequent comment from participants and stakeholders was that they did not know what Woburn is or where it is located (what its boundaries are). The name was sometimes thought to refer to a small geographic area around the intersection of Markham and Ellesmere, but not to the larger area defined by the City of Toronto as the Woburn neighbourhood. None of the stakeholders were aware of the City of Toronto initiative to define neighbourhoods in Toronto.

The Woburn neighbourhood as defined by the Community and Neighbourhood Services Department of the City of Toronto is very large and diverse. As currently described, it was felt to be too large, diverse and unconnected to be a

neighbourhood. The defined Woburn neighbourhood is divided by a number of ravines and physical barriers like hills and parks as well as by major arterial roads six to eight lanes wide. These physical barriers serve to break the large area into smaller, more isolated sub-neighbourhoods. Transit routes were seen as serving commuters and connecting with the large shopping centres like the Scarborough Town Centre. It was noted that they did not easily connect stakeholders within the Woburn neighbourhood – and that transfers between buses would be required to navigate the neighbourhood.

In commenting on its physical area and large population size, many participants noted that Woburn is made up of a number of smaller areas or sub-neighbourhoods and that these areas might be better considered "neighbourhoods." Some identified these sub-areas as relating to the main intersections and main roads: for example, there was a neighbourhood identified for the Ellesmere Road area and another for the Lawrence Avenue area. Other stakeholders suggested that several neighbourhoods related directly to large social housing developments like Tuxedo Court and Orton Park and the more stable single-family-housing residential areas. Neighbourhoods were also described that reflected tenure and attachment to the area: there were more established "traditional" neighbourhoods, where long-term residents lived in owned, single-family housing, and other neighbourhoods where recent immigrants settled, typically in lower-rent, high-rise apartment buildings. There was, however, no consensus regarding more appropriate neighbourhood designations and boundaries. Many participants noted that this was the first time they had thought of the area as a neighbourhood and that they had not fully thought through options or alternatives to the current City-defined boundaries.

As part of their explanation of why they did not feel Woburn was a neighbourhood, participants described some general characteristics of a neighbourhood. They described neighbourhood as a place of belonging, an area where people knew one another (or knew of one another). Neighbourhoods implied familiarity and relationships. Neighbourhoods were seen as areas where people walked and where local services, like schools, neighbourhood parks, banks and local food stores, were available. Service providers spoke of strong connections among service providers in a neighbourhood.

There was consensus that the area defined as Woburn does not have a focal point or centre. It was noted that Woburn does not have any landmarks or visual identifiers that strong neighbourhoods often have. There were many comments that Woburn lacks gathering or meeting places for residents and that there is no sense of community. Woburn also does not have a strong business or commercial core. Most of the businesses in the area were described as small with a small number of employees in low-wage, low-skill manufacturing and service industry jobs. There are many commercial strips along the main roads in the area and two malls, Cedarbrae and an older plaza at the corner of Lawrence and Markham Roads. Some participants thought Cedarbrae Mall could be a focal point or hub, but there was no agreement on this. In contrast, the Scarborough Town Centre, outside the Woburn boundaries, was identified as a focal point and gathering place.

Woburn does not seem to be recognized by service providers and institutions as a neighbourhood. The City ward boundaries as well as the provincial and federal riding boundaries cut through Woburn, dividing the area in half. It is served by two police

districts, and many other service providers have boundaries that include only parts of Woburn. It did not appear that any public institution or service provider could take a neighbourhood perspective for the Woburn neighbourhood.

Perceptions of the Neighbourhood

There tended to be two different perspectives on whether Woburn was a good place to live: that of the newcomer immigrant population and that of the more established, longer-term residents. This latter group was seen as loyal to the area, commenting that "it was a good place to live" but nervous about the ongoing change. These residents had established connections and remained in the neighbourhood, but their children moved out of Woburn when they established their own households. They reported feeling less safe in general, although their part of the neighbourhood may be as safe as it was in the past. There were comments that these residents felt neglected and ignored and that as a result they did not maintain their properties or feel pride in their neighbourhood.

Residents living in high-rise rental housing were described as having less contact and connection with the area and their neighbours. For many of them the Woburn neighbourhood is a location to settle and become established. Many commented that these residents were isolated, either through language, culture and lack of information about the neighbourhood and available services and supports or because they were focused on obtaining or maintaining jobs and struggling to support families. Frequently service providers noted that people were very isolated in the high-rise buildings and that they did not socialize or leave their apartments for services or supports. Many service providers noted a reduced level of participation in their programs and events in the winter and commented that newcomer residents were less willing to venture outside, especially at night and in the cold winter months. Perceptions of lack of safety also served to restrict mobility.

All participants commented that Woburn had changed a lot over the past five to 10 years. They noted the continued population growth and diversity and the identification of Woburn as a settlement area for recent immigrants and refugees. Residents noted the increasing development of high-density housing and the loss of local plazas, banks and local services. Nearly all commented that there was more crime than in the past and that safety had become an increasingly important issue. Mental health issues were also identified as a challenge new to Woburn, and some participants commented that there had also been an increase in seniors and single mothers in the neighbourhood.

Participants saw a future of continued growth and development. They wondered about the impact of the new housing developments (high-rise condos) on the local areas and on the underserved Woburn neighbourhood. They anticipated that youth issues would increase in importance in the future. They also noted that the neighbourhood would continue to grow at a faster than average rate and would increase in ethno-racial diversity. If efforts are not taken to develop and support local infrastructure, the participants anticipated continued income segregation as well as pockets of ghettos based on ethnicity, race and culture.

Neighbourhood Vitality Indicators

Participants were interested in measures of neighbourhood strength and offered a range of comments on those proposed in the neighbourhood vitality indicators as well as some additional measures to expand the proposed tool.

It was suggested that the economy section be enhanced with measures of employment related to the Woburn neighbourhood. In particular, they suggested a measure of types of employment, a measure of full-time and part-time employment and a measure that provides information on the stability of employment for residents of the neighbourhood. It was also proposed that an indicator be added to show the proportion of residents employed in the neighbourhood. The need for other business measures, relating to local employers and businesses and types and nature of employment they offered, was highlighted, although specific measures were not identified.

The median household income measure was seen as an acceptable broad and general indicator of income. However, in the Woburn neighbourhood it masked significant variations of income at the census tract level and the family income level. Participants suggested it be augmented with an income measure by family size, to provide more detailed family-based income comparisons.

There was general interest in the measure “percentage living within one kilometre of community space” and a consensus that the measure needed further attention. The measure as currently constituted was seen as too broad and lacking the detail to be useful in measuring neighbourhood access to resources and facilities. Participants asked how “community space” was defined. They commented that it should include a measure of access to local outdoor public space – parks, playgrounds – available at the local, neighbourhood level. They also commented that there should also be a measure of access to community facilities, including public libraries and community centres.

Participants suggested that a measure or ratio of social housing units to private housing units be added to the urban fabric section. This would indicate concentrations of low-income housing and highlight the need for supports and services.

There were a number of suggestions for additions to the demographics section of the proposed indicators. Woburn is a rapidly growing neighbourhood and participants, not surprisingly, proposed that a measure of population change be added to the indicator list. They also suggested that this measure be correlated to changes in service levels and funding. Participants proposed that a measure of dependency be added to the indicator list that would show the population of children, youth and seniors as a proportion of the working age population or the employed population. This would highlight neighbourhoods with high proportions of dependent population sub-groups. Participants noted that there were no measures of lone-parent families or of persons with disabilities. Both these groups have been identified as vulnerable and facing unique challenges.

In the education section, residents suggested there should be a measure relating the number of schools to the number of children, showing the local access to neighbourhood schools as well as the sizes of the schools.

There were no specific comments on the health measures.

There was consensus about the need to measure the perception of safety among residents and stakeholders rather than reported crime rates (which were a fraction of actual crime). Perceptions were considered more important in influencing behaviour and participation than actual crime reports.

There was consensus that the indicators needed to be expanded to include measures of connectiveness, participation and engagement. It was suggested that indicators related to volunteerism, participation and voting could be considered. Participants acknowledged that these would be difficult to measure, but nonetheless very valuable. In a similar vein, participants noted the need to measure the community's perception of support: does the community feel supported, is its voice heard, are its issues being addressed?

And finally, participants noted that there were no measures of access and transportation. In particular, they commented on the need to develop indicators to measure mobility, accessibility and transit.

Neighbourhood Strengths and Weaknesses

Despite efforts to encourage participation, few residents contributed to this research study. Consequently, the input on what they valued most in their neighbourhood is quite weak. One resident noted that he did not value anything in the neighbourhood “because it wasn’t a neighbourhood”; another valued the recycling, trees and tree planting and the facilities and care available for seniors. One resident valued the multiculturalism of the neighbourhood, and the final participant did not complete the form.

Service providers were asked what neighbourhood assets they thought Woburn residents most valued. Of the 21 participating service providers, responses were received from 10. The are listed here in descending order of frequency:

- local schools and education
- local library; health services; and employment and employment services and supports
- settlement services and LINC classes; safety; diversity
- opportunity to participate in community; knowledge or information about the community
- community services; housing; parks and recreation; regular bus service; low rents; places for youth; convenience of area for new immigrants

Woburn is a very diverse neighbourhood. Its high rate of growth is connected to its attractiveness as an immigrant settlement community and to the development and redevelopment of parts of the neighbourhood for condos and higher-priced housing. Participants commented that one of the strengths of the neighbourhood was that people were trying to better themselves, through education and hard work. It was noted that library use was very high, so high that the library had to redesign its

programs for children and youth to accommodate the demand. Information sessions organized in the elementary schools by the SEPT program often attracted large crowds of parents and families. Youth were identified as both a strength and a weakness. There is a higher than average (for the city of Toronto) proportion of youth in the Woburn neighbourhood; while many were focused and are positive, others were disconnected and were involved in youth gangs and other marginal activity.

Participants noted that the attractive parks, ravines and waterways in the general area of Scarborough were strengths, but they cautioned that one had to know where they were located and how to access them. Local schools, including the three high schools, could be neighbourhood assets if they could provide better links to community services and provided access to their space for local residents and service providers.

Participants found it easier to identify weaknesses than strengths associated with the Woburn neighbourhood. Weaknesses were organized into a number of broad issue areas. Generally, it was reported that residents did not know what was available to them, or if they did, the understanding of local services was influenced by inaccurate perceptions and word of mouth from other residents or friends. New immigrants often had a fear of institutions and government and were reluctant to use available services or ask for help. While a number of discrete efforts were identified in the research project, generally, coordination among service providers in the area was weak. There was very limited local planning and development; no one, including elected representatives from all levels of government, focused specifically on the neighbourhood to engage residents and stakeholders. There were a number of gaps in services, including the absence of neighbourhood focal points or service centres. There was no clear business focus or engagement in the neighbourhood. And finally, the neighbourhood was considered by many to be unsafe. This restricted mobility and access and had implications for service providers. One provider required staff to travel in pairs for home visits in this neighbourhood.

Service providers commented that funding is a barrier to the development of strong neighbourhoods in general. More flexible funding is needed to support new initiatives and partnerships focused on neighbourhood development.

Employment was also identified as a significant barrier to the development of a strong neighbourhood in Woburn. Participants commented that people need the foundation of adequate income and the self-esteem that comes from employment to be able to participate in community and contribute to making it strong.

Use of Neighbourhood Assets: Facilitating and Barrier Conditions

No specific facilitating conditions were identified by participants, although the discussions and research identified some evidence of collaboration and service adjustments to facilitate access and connect and engage residents. For example, the Settlement Education Partnership in Toronto (SEPT) workers, assigned to schools in Woburn to connect families to supports and services, work out of the Cedarbrae Library in the summer months.

Availability

Availability of services was seen as perhaps the biggest access challenge. There is no neighbourhood service centre or hub and limited availability of other services to support the diverse population of the neighbourhood. Many of the multi-service community organizations that serve residents of Woburn, like the Storefront, West Scarborough Boys and Girls Club and West Hill Community Services, are located outside the Woburn boundaries. Many of the Woburn-based organizations locate in the area for convenience and access to the Scarborough area, not because of a particular commitment to serve the specific Woburn neighbourhood.

There is limited recreation service in Woburn. One of the two recreation centres includes a district ice rink and swimming pool but does not include a gym or other multi-use recreation facilities. The second facility has meeting space and focuses on supporting clubs and special events. There is no Community Health Centre in the area. The library is overwhelmed with demand for programs. Reference was made in the discussions to a welcome centre for immigrants, which no longer exists but was seen as a much-needed service given the settlement nature of the area. Youth, seniors, women and newcomers were identified as underserved and "in-need" groups in Woburn.

As noted earlier, Woburn is intersected by City of Toronto ward boundaries and by provincial and federal riding boundaries. This has led to some unusual service availability challenges. For example, the Ontario Early Years Centres have been developed to reflect provincial riding boundaries. Woburn is served by two OEYCs, only one of which is located in the neighbourhood; the other is outside the neighbourhood.

Proximity

The measure of one kilometre as a walkable distance to neighbourhood services was not considered a useful measure in Woburn. Distances are too great and local services are sparse. While a listing of community services shows a range of services and non-profit organizations, many have a broader catchment area and do not focus on the Woburn neighbourhood. Markham Road, which runs through the centre of Woburn, is also the centre of Scarborough, and some organizations choose to locate in this area to have easier access to all areas of Scarborough. This makes it appear as if Woburn is reasonably well served; however, if the list of organizations and services were focused only on those serving the Woburn neighbourhood, it would be a shorter list.

Woburn is served by a variety of TTC bus routes. The LRT stop at the Scarborough Town Centre is just outside the Woburn neighbourhood. A number of service providers commented that their catchment area tended to follow the direct TTC bus routes (i.e., direct to their service location). Residents would travel to access services as long as they could take one bus. Other service providers commented that residents were not prepared to travel far for services in the winter or in the evenings, and participation of groups that rely on public transit fell off significantly at this time. The Scarborough Centre Ontario Early Years Centre increased its programs in the evenings and Saturdays because of demand for programs after the workday when families may have access to a car. Most other service providers offer services during traditional office hours. Many participants commented that evening and weekend TTC service was not good and that there were long wait times for bus service.

Roads in the Woburn area were not always supportive of pedestrian traffic. For example, some sections of Markham Road do not have sidewalks. The width of the major road crossings – six to eight lanes – creates a further barrier to pedestrian movement.

Accessibility

Access to services includes hours of operation, eligibility, user fees and costs, and waiting lists.

Both user fees and equipment costs were seen as affecting the ability of residents to participate in Parks and Recreation programs offered at Centennial Recreation Centre. The City of Toronto's Welcome Policy now requires written proof of income as well as a copy of a previous income tax return. Many schools have stopped using the skating rink at Centennial because the students do not have skates and the rink does not provide them.

Many participants reported that it was hard to find information about services in the area: there were language and culture barriers as well as basic challenges of where to go to learn about the supports. It was also noted that residents did not have much civic knowledge, including understanding of government and the services that it provides and their rights as residents. Immigrant status, while not a legal barrier, was seen as a perceived barrier that prevented newcomers from asking for help in case it was used against them and their immigration application. Service operating hours were identified as a barrier for working residents.

A number of service providers identified waiting lists as a barrier to accessing service. For example, the Cedarbrae Library had a waiting list for the homework club for children and youth, and it had to change many of its programs (reduce the hours of programming) to accommodate the overwhelming demand for services. The West Hill CHC, the only Community Health Centre in Scarborough, also had a waiting list. Other services, like children's mental health, were identified as having waiting lists.

Capacity

One of the challenges in Woburn is the lack of community space. This posed a significant challenge for this research project, as the consultant struggled to find accessible and suitable locations for the focus group and sounding meetings. Apart from the local schools, which require permits and have associated timing and costs issues, and religious institutions, there are few locations for community gatherings.

As was noted by participants in the project, community services and facilities were not growing with the rate of population increase and need. There was very limited community development or none at all, and no planning capacity in the neighbourhood. Collaborative work between service organizations tended to be issue-specific or project-specific. This was exacerbated by short-term funding that reinforced narrow project outcomes. Programs were always in flux and staff were chasing limited project funding that put organizations in competition with one another. No one organization had the responsibility or the capacity to look at the neighbourhood as a whole. Efforts were underway to develop this capacity in

Scarborough, but the efforts, too, were challenged by lack of resources, time and capacity.

The Volunteer Centre of Toronto recently closed its Scarborough office and will deliver its programs through a downtown (Bloor and Spadina) location and with part-time volunteers in Scarborough. It was not clear what the implications would be to volunteerism in the Scarborough area and Woburn in particular. Service providers consulted for this project did not comment specifically on the volunteer component of their programs.

Quality

Language and culture were identified by most participants as significant access challenges. Service providers described challenges they faced in reaching the residents and building a trusting relationship. Some service providers reported that they had been trying to develop relationships with local religious leaders to get their formal support and endorsement for families to use their programs. Providers were struggling to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services as the population of the area evolves over time.

Some participants commented that some services are not particularly welcoming to all Woburn residents. Youth in particular were identified as experiencing some form of discrimination.

Neighbourhood Networks and Partnerships

There were few, if any neighbourhood events in the Woburn area. The service sector was not well linked, as was discussed in the “capacity” section above, and there was no connection among Woburn businesses such as a Business Improvement Area (BIA) to bring focus to that sector. This provides further evidence to reinforce the earlier discussions that Woburn is not a neighbourhood or distinct area.

Recently there was a “Take Back the Community” fair at the Toronto Community Housing Corporation buildings at Markham Road and Ellesmere following a double shooting last May. Residents from the two buildings and others from the immediate neighbourhood participated in a highly successful day with food, entertainment, activities and service provider information. While successful, this type of event was rare. There was no organization with a Woburn neighbourhood mandate, and existing service providers were focused on service delivery and did not have time or resources to play a community development and engagement role.

Participants identified political meetings, usually at election time, as a way for neighbourhood members to come together. They also highlighted as very successful the occasional information sessions and workshops or meetings organized by the Settlement Education Partnership in Toronto (SEPT) workers at Woburn area schools and other meetings involving the library. Parks and Recreation was trying to build stronger relationships with Woburn youth, but it was a slow and challenging process to develop trust.

Woburn residents regularly accessed a range of services outside the immediate Woburn neighbourhood, but there were limits on how far they were prepared to travel. A number of providers commented that residents would not travel downtown, a trip

that could take an hour and a half by transit and seemed to present a perceived barrier for residents.

Woburn does not have strong external connections. Participants agreed that Woburn has limited connection to and influence with decision makers. Many commented, in fact, that Woburn was isolated and ignored by decision makers and other city-wide service institutions because it has no identity like that of other Scarborough neighbourhoods such as Malvern, West Hill and Warden Woods.

Investment Priorities

The investment priorities identified in the Woburn discussions followed closely from the discussion of weaknesses and barriers.

Building on what exists was identified as the first priority. There was consensus that attention needed to be given to identify and help facilitate connections within the neighbourhood. There needed to be a stronger relationship between employers, businesses (investors), residents, service providers, faith groups and education. Support needed to be given to foster collaboration among service providers to better support the neighbourhood and to support improved promotion of existing services – for example, to faith communities.

Participants commented repeatedly that schools, the library and Parks and Recreation facilities were (or should be) the focal points or centres of the neighbourhood. These local spaces, where people already gather, were seen as places were residents could access information about programs, supports, services and resources as well as places where residents could come together and connect. This would help residents develop relationships with others in the neighbourhood and would get people out of their homes. Where appropriate, services could be offered from these locations. This was in addition to their other educational, library or recreation program purposes. It was identified that there would need to be some investment to build this capacity and responsiveness in the existing Woburn facilities.

There was consensus that the Woburn area needed community space: one or more community-based centres that could provide a range of services and supports to local residents. A number of options were suggested in the discussions, including a multi-service centre, a storefront modelled on the successful East Scarborough Storefront, or a mixed health and community service centre. As was discussed earlier, there was no organization that had responsibility for addressing the needs of the Woburn neighbourhood, and this absence had an impact on the neighbourhood.

It is important to note that these investment discussions related to the Woburn area as an underserved area of Scarborough and not to a shared understanding of Woburn as a neighbourhood. The services and supports would be needed whether Woburn was one neighbourhood, divided into smaller neighbourhood areas, or linked to other neighbourhoods. It was a large and rapidly growing area that was inadequately supported by existing services. Efforts to develop a sense of neighbourhood(s) would require attention to longer-term neighbourhood development and business development activity.

Specific investment priorities were identified for youth, seniors, newcomers and mental health services. All were repeatedly identified as underserved and at risk. Similarly, community infrastructure support, including community outreach, development, local planning and coordination/collaboration, was identified as a priority.

5. Analysis of Findings

This section highlights key issues raised in the preceding discussions of the three neighbourhoods. It makes comparisons and draws common conclusions from the research findings.

Definition and Scale of Neighbourhood

The three neighbourhoods studied in this project are quite different. Roncesvalles is an older neighbourhood with a strong commercial and residential sector. It is in the west end of the old city of Toronto. Henry Farm is a newer neighbourhood, built up in the 1960s and 1970s as part of Toronto's planned suburbs. It is a compact neighbourhood with high areas of population density, almost all of its residents located between Leslie Street and Highway 404. Woburn is three or four times larger than the other two neighbourhoods in population and is more geographically spread out than the others. It is in central Scarborough and is a diverse and rapidly growing settlement area for newcomers to Toronto. Other than one common element, these neighbourhoods are quite different. They have in common at least one area, or census tract (CT), that is among the 50 lowest-income census tracts in Toronto.

Despite the differences, feedback from all three neighbourhoods supports the finding that the neighbourhood boundaries defined by the Community and Neighbourhood Services Department of the City of Toronto do not reflect local understanding and experience of the neighbourhood. The residents' notion of a neighbourhood is at a smaller scale than the current neighbourhoods and more likely reflects one or two CTs rather than the current three to nine CTs.

It was difficult to develop firm criteria to define neighbourhoods; however, this research has suggested a number of factors that should be taken into consideration in establishing neighbourhoods and in guiding neighbourhood-based investment strategies.

- Historical identification with a defined community: Roncesvalles is a more established neighbourhood with a history and neighbourhood culture, in contrast with the more recently developed area of Woburn.

- Natural or structural physical boundaries: The Henry Farm neighbourhood is divided into two geographic "enclaves" by a major arterial road. There is no physical connection between these areas, and the residents in each identified their neighbourhood very clearly by which side of the road they live on.

- Common identification or experience: Woburn has two or three distinct groups of CTs, based on income, housing tenure and settlement, that have little in common with one another. Henry Farm is a neighbourhood with two distinct sub-neighbourhoods, the Henry Farm area, identified primarily with affluent homeowners, and the lower- income Parkway Forest area, mostly made up of newcomers sharing the experience of settlement and adjustment to a new country.

- Commonly used local facilities, neighbourhood centres or landmarks that connect people to the neighbourhood: Residents in distinct neighbourhoods could identify local places where people gathered and the local facilities that they used. This explained the differences in strength of feeling and clarity about neighbourhood between Roncesvalles, Henry Farm and Woburn.

- Administrative and political boundaries: The Roncesvalles and Henry Farm neighbourhoods fall within ward and federal and provincial riding boundaries, whereas Woburn is divided by several political boundaries and does not have clear neighbourhood representation or voice. The strength and confidence of a neighbourhood's identity cannot be well served when multiple political representatives and administrative officials relate to only fragmented parts of the neighbourhood. It is hard to develop an internally defined neighbourhood when it is not perceived and related to as a distinct whole from the outside.

Neighbourhood Assets

Discussions in each neighbourhood produced lists of assets most valued by participants and other lists of neighbourhood strengths. These are described in detail in "Neighbourhood Findings" above. Despite the differences between the neighbourhoods, the responses were remarkably consistent. Variation was predictable and tended to reflect the state of development and cohesion of the neighbourhood.

The range of responses has been consolidated into a typology of five main asset areas:

- physical assets: neighbourhood infrastructure, housing, transit and mobility, shopping, accessible public and private spaces

- social assets: neighbourhood connectedness, participation, engagement, neighbourhood development, pride of place, neighbourhood voice and influence

- diversity-related assets: supports for diverse population groups and interests to participate and contribute in community, including language, settlement and employment supports

- service assets: availability of and access to range of services in the neighbourhood and locally based neighbourhood planning and service coordination/collaboration assets

- safety and mobility assets: ability to participate safely and without fear

The five assets combine to provide a strong and comprehensive understanding of critical neighbourhood assets. The research into the three neighbourhoods demonstrated that asset mixes vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and that

while some of the neighbourhoods have better assets, none of the three communities felt they had all necessary assets in sufficient quantities.

Assessing Neighbourhood Assets

As part of the research project, participants were asked to identify and assess specific neighbourhood assets in five dimensions: availability, proximity, access, capacity and quality. Efforts were made to identify barriers that impeded use of the assets as well as facilitating conditions that encouraged or supported use of the assets. Throughout the research process, it became clear that local knowledge and experience in the neighbourhood provided critically important information about the utility of an asset beyond its physical location on a map.

Despite the significant differences between the three neighbourhoods, there is some similarity in the asset analysis. These are highlighted below.

Availability: The presence of an important resource within the neighbourhood or the general area is a first important consideration in assessing the strength of an asset base. The Henry Farm neighbourhood was identified as having a relatively good asset base, although more local services were identified as needed in the Parkway Forest area. Roncesvalles also has a good asset base, which participants hoped would be complemented soon by a new recreation centre. Woburn is the least well served of the three neighbourhoods and identified basic availability as a significant access barrier.

Proximity: While they are different types of neighbourhoods, both Henry Farm and Roncesvalles enjoy pedestrian access to neighbourhood assets. Both reported good access to the TTC, which brings external and community assets within reasonable distance. Woburn has bus service, but it is focused on commuters and trips to shopping centres, and the weekend and evening service was reported to be infrequent. Distances are great, residents reported they do not feel safe in the neighbourhood, and walking is not an option for most in the neighbourhood. Proximity is a significant barrier for Woburn residents.

The research confirmed the need to look beyond the location of a resource on a map, as there may be a range of real and perceived proximity barriers that serve to distance a resource from the neighbourhood. For example, traffic and the width of large arterial roads may impede children or seniors from accessing a local library without assistance. This does not completely negate the availability of the local asset, but it suggests a limitation on its utility. This is evident in Henry Farm and in Woburn. In Henry Farm, the library, schools and daycares have worked out regular adult-supervised library visits to partially overcome the proximity barrier.

Access: Accessibility issues tend to be more hidden than availability or proximity, because they are linked to the operations and procedures of organizations and are often more complicated to deal with.

A common range of access barriers were identified among the three neighbourhoods, although they vary in intensity from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. They include

user fees, eligibility criteria, reduced hours of service, cost of transit (and access), safety-related fears, program cuts and other barriers. Lack of information about services and waiting list barriers were also identified in Woburn.

Capacity: Capacity is central to an investment strategy for strong neighbourhoods. Service providers, community agencies and groups, while resourceful and creative, must have adequate resources to provide infrastructure, meet needs and support neighbourhoods. The resolution of capacity issues usually lies beyond the direct control of the community and often requires external investments to sustain or build additional capacity.

Capacity is an important issue for all three neighbourhoods. Population growth and increasing diversity in the Parkway Forest area and the Woburn neighbourhoods have stretched the existing asset base. Roncesvalles also reported capacity barriers relating to parks, swimming and gaps in social service sector capacity. The lack of neighbourhood development, leadership and development capacity was highlighted in Woburn as a barrier to the development of a stronger neighbourhood, as was the lack of physical neighbourhood space capacity.

Quality: Quality of the asset was not seen as an important barrier or facilitating condition except with regard to culturally sensitive and language related services. None of the neighbourhoods felt they had appropriate levels and quality of multilingual and culturally appropriate services for their populations, and all said that this created significant barriers.

Neighbourhood Vitality

Participants' discussion of neighbourhood vitality focused largely on the proposed indicators of neighbourhood vitality developed in Research Project #3 of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force as well as on a rich range of ideas for broadening the proposed base of indicators with additional measures. In general, participants commented that the proposed indicators were mixed and included both negative and positive measures. While a mix was considered good in principle, it was noted that the current measures were not indicators of "vitality." They also commented that the indicators were basic measures and that perhaps they could be linked or related to tell a more powerful story about neighbourhood strength.

Figure 6: Summary of Feedback on Proposed Measures of Neighbourhood Vitality presents the consolidated neighbourhood comments and input on the proposed measures.

There was a significant discussion in each of the three neighbourhoods of the need for other indicators, measures that would provide insight into social inclusion and engagement in a neighbourhood. Suggestions were made that such measures could include participation in the community; voting; measures related to volunteerism; and the presence of neighbourhood associations, tenants' associations and other community-based programs like Neighbourhood Watch.

It was also recommended that the quantitative indicators, largely based on Statistics Canada data, be augmented with qualitative indicators that measure or track perceptions and experience in neighbourhoods. It was recognized that using qualitative data would be more difficult and costly than using quantitative measures, but it was felt to be valuable in providing a more comprehensive picture of a neighbourhood over time and as compared with other neighbourhoods.

In addition, there were suggestions that further qualitative measures be added to the vitality measurement tool to assess the level of support and connection that neighbourhoods feel with external decision makers. Two broad areas of inquiry were identified.

- Do residents feel supported and valued (as opposed to isolated or ignored) by decision makers?
- Do residents feel they have influence and a voice with decision makers?

In general there was a lot of consistency in the comments and feedback offered by the three quite different neighbourhoods. While there was support for some of the indicators, none of the neighbourhoods felt that the tool would accurately describe their neighbourhood or its level of vitality. All argued for further refinement of the proposed indicators and the inclusion of qualitative indicators to broaden and enhance the data-based indicators. Specific feedback from Henry Farm and Woburn argued for more detail in describing income, households, housing and other variables reflecting the diverse and rapidly changing nature of the neighbourhoods. Roncesvalles provided significant input on economic and quality-of-life indicators, reflecting the involvement of two active Business Improvement Associations as well as active residents' associations and groups. Of the three neighbourhoods, Roncesvalles is the most established, with a distinct small-neighbourhood feel and culture that stakeholders are trying to protect.

Public Spaces and Places

The findings from the research in Henry Farm, Roncesvalles and Woburn highlighted the importance of a hub, focal point or community "centre" to the strength and vitality of a neighbourhood. The findings from the discussion about Woburn described what happens when there is not a strong neighbourhood anchor and how things are different in neighbourhoods where there is a strong focus and centre. The input from Woburn participants described a "centre" or hub as an investment priority or as something they would especially value.

A physical focal point in a neighbourhood helps foster a sense of neighbourhood identity. It can be a school, library, community centre or park. Sometimes there are several gathering places within a neighbourhood, including private places like shopping malls. In the Henry Farm neighbourhood, the local schools, childcare and parks were identified as the most important places to the neighbourhood. Similarly, while there is no clear focus in Woburn, participants recognized the potential of the library, local schools and the recreation centres to act as neighbourhood hubs. In Roncesvalles, the Polish community relates to a church and a local credit union. In the larger neighbourhood, a new outdoor market is becoming a focal point, and

Figure 6: Summary of Feedback on Proposed Measures of Neighbourhood Vitality

	Comments on Proposed Indicator/Measure	**Additional Measures**
Economy		
Median household income	- too broad, does not distinguish between family types, sizes, or variations within the neighbourhood (CT level)	- income by family size - measure of income distribution: maximum and minimum, % of population in top and bottom 20% income, etc.
% of population ages 25+ who are unemployed	- OK	- need to extend to ages 16+ who are unemployed
% of households spending 30% or more of household income on shelter costs	- OK measure but does not take into account differences in household composition	- measure of number/proportion of multiple-family households - measure of one-person households

		<u>Other Economy Measures:</u>
		- measures of employment
		  - of residents living in the neighbourhood: types of employment, income, full-time/part-time
		  - businesses in neighbourhood: types and nature of employment they offer, % of local residents employed by local businesses
		- measures of income:
		  - ratio of residents in receipt of income support vs. those working
		- commercial-residential measures
		- home ownership-rental ratio
		- public investment compared with taxes paid (commercial and residential)
		- range of business measures: measures related to shoppers, type of commercial activity, success/profitability, fair taxation, stability, level of investment, etc.

Education		

% of grade 10 Students passing Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)	- concerns about accuracy (and other issues) related to the literacy tests	
% of population with university or college qualifications	- does not take into account accreditation and equivalency barriers encountered by foreign-trained and foreign-educated residents	
% of population (ages 15+) attaining less than grade 9 education	- a negative measure	- measure the % of population finishing high school
		<u>Other Education Measures:</u> - need a measure of access to education that incorporates cost and income - ratio of education: ratio of those who have attained a defined level of higher education compared with those who have attained a lower level of education - measure that compares level of education with unemployment level - measure of the number of local schools per defined number of children (access to neighbourhood education)
Urban Fabric		
% of occupied private dwellings requiring major repairs	- a negative measure	

% of population living within 1 km of a community space (other than a school)	- this could be a good indicator if it was better defined: what is community space?
	- 1 km walking distance is not as relevant in suburbs as in inner city
		- need different types of access measures:
		  - measure of access to hub: schools, library, recreation
		  - measure of access to community space: parks, playgrounds
		  - measure of access to services
		- need to incorporate all services "serving" a neighbourhood, including those located within or outside neighbourhood boundaries
		- need to remove those service organizations/programs located in neighbourhood but not serving the neighbourhood

		<u>Other Urban Fabric Measures:</u>

		- mobility: public transit - forms of housing: ratio of social housing to private housing, ratio of rental to ownership housing - amount of green space per capita
Health	General Comments on Health: - both health indicators seem "primitive" - the indicators don't cover the range of ages living in the neighbourhood: no seniors' measures, no measures related to disability	
Fertility rates per 1,000, ages 15 -19	- see above	
Low-birth-weight babies per 1,000 live births	- see above	
		Other Health Measures: - environmental health indicators - rates of cancer - availability and access to medical professionals (doctors) and facilities (community health centre, clinics, hospitals) - mortality rate - fertility rate - measure of newcomers/population without access to health care coverage
Demographics		
% with no knowledge of official languages	- question about the usefulness of measuring knowledge of French for Toronto neighbourhoods	
% of recent immigrants		
% by mobility status one year ago	- a negative measure	- population stability would be a more positive measure
		Other Demographic Measures: - measure of age distribution and change - marital status - measures of the number of two parent and lone-parent families

		by family size - rate of growth/change - relationship between rate of population change and public investment in neighbourhood - persons with disabilities - dependency ratio: children and seniors compared with adult working population, or ratio of employed residents to those not working
Safety	<u>General Comments on Safety:</u> - indicators of crime, not safety - negative	
Violent crime charges per 1,000 population	- see above	
Property crime charges per 1,000 population	- see above	
		<u>Other Safety Measures:</u> - traffic accidents - measure of youth crime - measure of perception of safety: this is more important than the actual rates in influencing behaviour and engagement in neighbourhoods - foot patrol

residents are advocating for a new community centre. In all three neighbourhoods, participants commented on the importance of public space such as neighbourhood parks and gathering places.

Participants talked about multiple uses of spaces and places (e.g., school facilities used by community groups, malls used by seniors' walking groups) and envisioned neighbourhoods with greater availability of and access to space. This suggests the need for leadership to make public space more accessible, for continued public investment in multi-function space and for leadership within the private sector to facilitate access, where appropriate, to private "public use" spaces.

Supporting Neighbourhood Voices

The research supported our understanding that strong self-identifying neighbourhoods often have organizations to voice their concerns and represent their interests. Roncesvalles has the Roncesvalles Macdonell Residents Association and the Parkdale Tenants Association, and the Henry Farm area has the Henry Farm Community Interest Association. Woburn, the least identifiable as a neighbourhood, does not have a clear neighbourhood-wide organization or voice.

On the other hand, strong neighbourhoods can be negative and insular. Narrow neighbourhood self-interest can override larger community interests. It can lead to homogeneous, protective neighbourhoods that do not support diversity or change. Bridging strategies are critical to connect neighbourhoods and to balance the strength of individual neighbourhoods with strong external relationships between different neighbourhoods. Bridging is important so that strong neighbourhoods can work together for larger community development and to coordinate effort and input into decisions. The Henry Farm and Parkway Forest areas, although part of the Henry Farm neighbourhood, have little in common and have no history of working together on joint initiatives. They share a common interest in the population growth that a proposed major housing development will bring and are starting to think about collaborating to influence the development decision.

The research identified a number of service and program partnerships and ad hoc networks at a larger community or city level, focused on specific issues. These may be funded networks or supported with resources by larger city-wide institutions. There is some evidence that more regular networking among community groups occurs in Roncesvalles, although this did not come out strongly in the focus groups. In Henry Farm and Woburn, there do not seem to be any regular working relationships or planned coordination among neighbourhood-based organizations or between adjacent neighbourhoods for shared action to improve the quality of community life. Local service organizations are caught up in the daily pressures of service delivery and do not have time or resources to take a larger view toward planning and coordination.

Neighbourhood planning and development infrastructure is important to develop capacity and strengthen neighbourhoods and to provide the critical bridges between and among neighbourhoods. Such an infrastructure with direct community participation could remain above the fray of daily service demands and help the

community shape and hold a shared vision for its health and social development. It could help ensure that the public sector and the community sector are working in a complementary and mutually reinforcing way to realize the community vision.

Economic Limits of Neighbourhoods

Larger economic conditions of unemployment, inadequate incomes, lack of affordable housing stock and newcomer settlement and integration are factors beyond the control or influence of even the strongest of neighbourhoods and well developed local asset bases.

These conditions have an impact, though, at the neighbourhood level in a variety of ways. They put pressure on local service providers to respond to people in crisis or distress because of poverty, homelessness, chronic unemployment or related mental health issues. Economic stresses serve to fragment and divide groups within communities and neighbourhoods by perpetuating differences in socio-economic status. This project provided evidence of a disconnection between apartment dwellers and homeowners in Henry Farm, Woburn and, to a lesser extent, Roncesvalles. Economic stresses restrict the active participation of the whole community in contributing to strong neighbourhood life because a segment of the population (newcomers, single parents, disabled people) needs to spend all its energy on ensuring basic individual and family survival.

Investment strategies to develop and promote strong neighbourhoods and build assets need to be supported by policy frameworks that reduce broad economic and social inequities and facilitate participation in neighbourhoods.

Investment Priorities

All three neighbourhoods identified the need for investment in a hub or community centre. This would include multi-use, accessible space that could be used by the neighbourhood and by service providers for activities, programs, gatherings and other activities. In Roncesvalles, two types of investment were identified: a town square and a community centre. In Henry Farm, the desired infrastructure investment varied. The Henry Farm area identified the need to improve access to the local school on weekends and evenings as a priority. The Parkway Forest area identified the need for a community “centre” as a priority. In Woburn, the investment discussion related to an area as defined by the City of Toronto, rather than a shared understanding or recognition of the area as a neighbourhood. Like those in the other neighbourhoods, Woburn participants strongly identified the priority need for one or more community spaces, centres or hubs in the area.

Related to the high priority given to physical infrastructure investments, the need for investment in community development, capacity building, coordination and planning was identified by all three neighbourhoods. Roncesvalles identified the need for a coordinating structure within the neighbourhood to link service providers and to provide a vehicle for collaboration and planning. The Parkway Forest area of Henry Farm described a neighbourhood structure that would provide coordination and

communication and would give the neighbourhood a voice. Woburn, the least developed and resourced of the three neighbourhoods, identified equally important basic-level investments in planning, communication and coordination.

Despite the significant socio-economic, demographic and geographical differences, the three neighbourhoods identified remarkably consistent service priorities for investment. All neighbourhoods identified settlement services (including ESL) and services for youth as priorities. Two of three neighbourhoods also identified services for seniors, mental health services and services for children. It was noted in all three neighbourhoods that while investment was needed in new services, investments to address the underfunding and lack of capacity of current services to meet demand and the diverse community need were very significant investment priorities. Both Henry Farm and Woburn stakeholders worried about the impact of development and intensification proposals and the additional strain this would put on the underresourced service system and on the neighbourhood character and quality of life, particularly in Henry Farm.

Some of the investment priorities reflected the state of neighbourhood development. Roncesvalles and Henry Farm identified the need for physical investment in their neighbourhoods. In Roncesvalles, participants described the need for investment in parking, traffic and beautification. Roncesvalles also identified the need for investment that would promote Roncesvalles as a strong neighbourhood. This related to the business agenda of promoting the neighbourhood as a unique shopping district and the residents' agenda of maintaining Roncesvalles as a strong and vibrant neighbourhood. In the Parkway Forest area of Henry Farm, participants discussed the state of disrepair of the private apartment buildings and the generally dirty and littered public and private spaces in the area. Woburn's investment list focused on improving relationships among the various stakeholder groups: service providers, residents, businesses, investors, institutions and faith communities. Woburn also highlighted the need to develop basic community infrastructure, including accessible and flexible neighbourhood space and community development and planning mechanisms and structures reflecting the underdeveloped nature of the neighbourhood.

The previous section concluded by identifying the need for investment strategies that are supported by public policy and programs to reduce barriers caused by economic and social inequality to participation and engagement in neighbourhoods. All three soundings reinforced the need for this critical investment, identifying a range of barriers associated with immigration and income-based inequality.

6. Reflections and Learnings

The object of this final section of the report is to reflect on what we have learned from this project that can inform future work and investments in neighbourhoods. This section examines broad project learnings related to content, investments in neighbourhoods, and processes and tools used in the project. In closing, we reflect on the applicability of our approach and of the asset mapping tool to the study of neighbourhoods elsewhere in Toronto (or other places).

Content

This project has demonstrated the value of using both quantitative and qualitative data to create an understanding of neighbourhoods. The balance between the two types of information is critical. On reflection, the project brought together demographic and socio-economic analysis and service analysis and mapping with the perspectives and insights of those at the neighbourhood level.

Neighbourhood-level aggregated data is important to a broad understanding of neighbourhood issues, but it clearly masks significant variation within neighbourhoods. In the research we learned that on closer study, local census tracts would frequently vary considerably from the other neighbourhood census tracts or from the neighbourhood average. Starting from the bigger picture does not support a comprehensive understanding of neighbourhoods or the identification of barriers, assets and neighbourhood investment opportunities.

Neighbourhoods are local, dynamic places. When thinking about neighbourhoods, efforts must be made to access local-level data that is updated regularly. Statistics Canada census information was critical for our research. However, on a number of occasions local stakeholders suggested that the situation had changed in some important way since the data had been collected four years earlier. Census data is updated every five years and can be as much as a year out of date when released. Although it is an important database, efforts must be made to supplement it with data from other, more frequently updated sources, such as surveys or databases from the Province, the City of Toronto, the school board or other city-wide service providers.

These results suggest that the proposed indicators of neighbourhood vitality have potential for use in neighbourhoods, but with three significant qualifications. First, the indicators are based almost entirely on Statistics Canada census databases. These have been shown to be inaccurate in describing the current situation in neighbourhoods and should be used carefully in areas that are subject to significant change over time. Second, the indicators for the most part are simple measures. They do not link or relate variables where there are known connections or cause and effect. Neighbourhoods are complex, and it is important that the measures offer a degree of relationship, such as a dependency measure, to reflect those connections and complexities. And finally, the measures are all quantitative. Perhaps the most frequent feedback the project received was that the measures should be augmented

with qualitative, attitude and perceptual measures. These are much more difficult and costly to use, but they provide a wealth of insight about a local neighbourhood and valuable input to decisions about neighbourhood investment.

This leads to some closing reflections on neighbourhood investment criteria and questions about decision making and priority setting. This research project examined three very different neighbourhoods. None of them is without gaps, unmet needs and investment ideas to support and develop their neighbourhood, but they are at very different points of evolution and investment would be channelled differently in each. It seems likely that they represent three types of typical Toronto neighbourhoods:

- undeveloped and underdeveloped areas (Woburn), where the priority would be to create neighbourhoods and build basic neighbourhood infrastructure
- developing neighbourhoods (Henry Farm's Parkway Forest area), which have emerging neighbourhood foundations on which to build
- developed neighbourhoods (Roncesvalles), which have to deal with new pressures, changes and emerging issues in a relatively stable urban area

This report does not offer suggestions on how to make the priority investment decisions, except to caution that the measures of investment return must be developed using a balance of quantitative and qualitative data, both simple and complex, which is as up to date as possible. The measures must be flexibly applied, like the research process, respecting unique local circumstances and characteristics and a broad understanding of neighbourhood strengths and vitality.

Investment Framework

Based on this study of three neighbourhoods in Toronto and the analysis of findings from both quantitative and qualitative data sources, an investment framework for building and sustaining strong neighbourhoods must:

- support fundamental or core facilities and services central to the asset base of a strong neighbourhood, supplemented by neighbourhood-specific supports and programs
- ensure that neighbourhood-level networking and bridging mechanisms and supports are in place for effective planning and coordination within neighbourhoods and across clusters of neighbourhoods within the larger community area
- use a conceptual framework based on an understanding of the range of neighbourhood assets that contribute to strong and vibrant neighbourhoods and analytical tools to assess use, value and access to those neighbourhood assets; and use a range of quantitative and qualitative measurement tools, including local stakeholder input
- recognize the importance of broader social and economic policy frameworks that are consistent with and reinforce local investments in the neighbourhood asset base and community capacity building

Each of these is discussed below.

Core Foundational Assets

It is clear from the research that strong neighbourhoods rely on key local institutions, which serve as focal points and hubs of community life. In the three neighbourhoods studied, local schools, libraries and community recreation centres were most frequently identified as performing or sharing this central neighbourhood function. Health centres and, to a lesser extent, childcare centres were identified in some, but not all, of the neighbourhoods. These services and facilities provide mandate-specific programming important to local residents and families, such as education, recreation or information resources. But these facilities also serve equally important community purposes, such as providing space for other community programming, running additional programs specific to the needs of the local population, and offering gathering places that facilitate connections and relationship building among local residents. This facilitating and supportive function is more evident in the stronger neighbourhoods of Henry Farm and Roncesvalles.

In addition to education, libraries, socio-recreational activity and health, it is proposed that mobility and safety be added to the foundation or core asset base of a neighbourhood. They are essential assets that facilitate use of the other core and neighbourhood assets. Community space – physical space – located in the neighbourhood that is accessible and available for community activities, programs and gatherings is the final component of core neighbourhood assets. Housing, employment and income are also recognized necessities of daily life with significant implications for a neighbourhood's asset base; however, they depend more on larger social and economic policy frameworks and will be discussed separately below.

Clearly, core neighbourhood assets must be developed and supported through investment. Challenges will be faced in determining the appropriate core asset base and framework to guide investment in neighbourhood assets. Another challenge will be ensuring a more integrated neighbourhood focus through cross-mandate collaboration and coordination among public services and other organizations engaged in the same neighbourhood. Meeting these challenges will require negotiation and support from higher political and administrative levels and a shared, common understanding of neighbourhood boundaries.

Core assets must be supplemented by neighbourhood-specific assets that reflect the local context and environment, the demographic and economic base and the needs of the local population. These assets should be determined at the local level and must be flexible to respond to the changing nature of neighbourhoods. Ideally, they will be integrated and coordinated. It was highlighted in the research that achieving these goals will depend on removing existing system barriers and renegotiating mandates, funding and accountability to create flexible and adaptive responses to unique neighbourhood conditions and opportunities.

Networking and Bridging

In addition to the range of public services, other important community groups and institutions contribute to the asset mix of a neighbourhood, including non-profit service providers, faith communities and a variety of civic and community-based organizations and affinity groups. The value of the non-profit sector is apparent not only for service roles but also for citizen engagement and involvement in community life. Investment frameworks should reinforce the stability and capacity of the

community service sector to play a complementary and mutually reinforcing role in relation to the public sector.

There was evidence in the neighbourhood research of a high level of joint initiatives and service partnerships in several neighbourhoods, involving municipal services, schools and non-profit community service agencies. Bilateral and sometimes trilateral arrangements were evident. The capacity to act together, to organize and to mobilize community input on an issue-by-issue basis exists to varying extents in the three neighbourhoods. The variation relates to the degree to which a neighbourhood is seen by service providers as a “neighbourhood” and to the existence (or lack) of local services. Like the presence of core assets in neighbourhoods, the degree of networking and bridging is influenced by funding and policy systems which should be reframed to support and facilitate networking and partnerships. Barriers related to lack of capacity or restrictive mandates should be reduced.

Less frequently found at the neighbourhood level is a more regular or permanent planning and coordinating capability. The absence of this community planning and development function was identified in several of the neighbourhoods studied. Further, opportunities for more cross-neighbourhood interaction and networking on areas of common interest are lost when enabling and facilitating structures and processes do not exist.

Planning frameworks are required that help integrate, coordinate and optimize the local resources available in the neighbourhood asset base as well as plan for asset enhancements and do so in a way that engages and respects all local stakeholders.

Framework for Understanding and Mapping Assets

This research project field-tested an asset mapping methodology and assessment framework to guide the collection, organization and analysis of data that could be used and refined for future community applications. (The quantitative and qualitative research process was described in more detail in section 2 of this report.)

Early in the project, a typology of neighbourhood assets was identified to provide the researchers with a tool to support the understanding and analysis of neighbourhood assets. The categories of assets included health; food and nutrition; housing; education; employment; child and family services; social and recreation facilities; civic and affinity groups; protective services; social services and crisis intervention; and population-specific assets. (See Appendix 1: Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Chart.)

The asset mapping tool was useful in that it allowed for the comprehensive identification and classification of the range of formal and informal assets in a neighbourhood. However, it emphasized social, health, educational and cultural assets over other important assets identified locally, such as businesses, mobility and transportation, and it lacked important core neighbourhood assets such as planning, coordination and networking. The tool should be modified to include these additional asset categories.

Service maps of each neighbourhood were also developed to support the understanding of assets. While there is significant potential for service mapping as a

support to asset analysis, the maps were incomplete and not always correct. For instance, they showed only services and supports located in the neighbourhood and did not include providers located elsewhere that served the neighbourhood. Also, the maps did not distinguish between one provider and multiple service providers in a location. In one neighbourhood there was an office building where a number of service providers were located, but only one service provider symbol was shown on the service map.

The efforts at service mapping highlighted other limitations of using only physical location as an indicator of access and asset value. Apparently a number of Scarborough-wide service providers are located in the Woburn area because it is central and provides easy access to the rest of Scarborough. They often have only limited geographic connection to the neighbourhood, or if they offer service in the neighbourhood, it is for their entire client base and is not focused on the local neighbourhood. Programs like these would be included on the service map as serving the Woburn neighbourhood.

The second stage of the analysis was to augment the information collection with an understanding, gained from the key informant interviews and focus groups, regarding the use of neighbourhood assets. A model was developed based on five asset variables: availability, proximity, accessibility, capacity and quality. These variables were considered key to understanding the use and value of neighbourhood assets to local neighbourhoods. Figure 3: Analysis of Facilitating and Barrier Conditions to Use of Neighbourhood Assets outlined the main elements of analytic model. The researchers found that the five asset variables were very useful in identifying the complex barriers and facilitating conditions that influence neighbourhood use of and value of an asset.

The final analysis looked at each of the defined asset categories (like housing, health, education) based on the five asset variables. An example of a completed Neighbourhood Asset Matrix for one neighbourhood is presented in Appendix 6. This analysis resulted in a comprehensive understanding of the use of specific types of assets in the community and asset-related barriers and facilitating conditions.

The use of the asset typology and the five key asset variables resulted in a comprehensive identification and assessment of neighbourhood assets. While not absolutely complete, the analysis presented a much broader picture of the neighbourhood than previously existed. This framework and these tools were useful in supporting the identification of investment priorities for building, strengthening or sustaining a neighbourhood’s asset base.

Linkage to Social and Economic Policy

Income, employment and housing are three critically important dimensions of everyday community life that a locally situated asset base can have little effect or influence on. Equity and decency in these areas fall to higher domains of social and economic policy related to business conditions and the labour market, wage and income supports and the stock of affordable housing. All are in the policy jurisdictions of the provincial and federal governments.

The neighbourhood asset base can and does make some provision for assistance with employment, income support and housing. For example, there are program subsidies for low-income families (e.g., subsidized childcare places), employment counselling and training supports and social housing initiatives. These provisions have always been designed to deal with residual needs arising from a relatively limited number of individuals and families falling out of the economic mainstream for short periods of time. The problem for the last decade or more has been that larger numbers of people have become economically marginalized and for longer periods of time. Newcomers, in particular, struggle with basic living conditions because of great difficulties in establishing themselves in good employment.

It is clear that no investment framework for building and sustaining a neighbourhood asset base can resolve fundamentally systemic and structural problems with the job market, income supports and affordable housing stock. Action is clearly required at the federal and provincial levels. At the same time, given sound social and economic policy in these areas, the neighbourhood asset base can play a strong support role in providing local support for unemployed, low-income and inadequately housed individuals and families.

It is also clear that neighbourhoods will not be strong unless there is an underpinning or foundation of engagement and individual capacity. Individuals cannot participate in and contribute to local neighbourhoods if they and their families lack basic income and housing. Individuals will not participate or contribute until they are settled and established and feel they have time, energy and capacity, including language, to engage. Neighbourhood assets can play a critical role to support and encourage local engagement and participation, but only once the fundamental income, employment, housing and settlement issues have been addressed by other levels of government.

Research Process

Research Project #5 involved quantitative and qualitative research in three diverse neighbourhoods in Toronto. The process involved analysis of socio-economic and demographic indicators, service mapping, deploying indicators of vitality, defining local assets and assessing the use and value of the assets to the neighbourhood. The process engaged a range of service provider, resident and business participants from the three selected neighbourhoods over the winter of 2004/05. The outreach and engagement methodology was designed both to elicit information from community stakeholders about their neighbourhoods and to bring them together to test the applicability of the asset mapping tools being used.

This section reflects on key elements of the research process and the researchers' experience with the process. Implications for future research as well as conclusions from the process or from use of the tools have been identified.

Process and Tools

The research process included a number of elements: quantitative and qualitative information collection and analysis; facilitated discussion of assets, barriers and facilitating conditions; further analysis and refinement; and a final sounding with a

facilitated discussion on the research findings and investment priorities. The research process incorporated data analysis based on the 2001 census, key informant interviews, focus groups and a larger, concluding meeting of stakeholders involved in the project. The tools, including interview and focus group templates, charts and analytical frameworks, were described earlier in this report.

The process design seemed to be effective and successful. Stakeholders had more than one opportunity to participate and contribute to the process and were able to validate the research findings and engage in a final discussion of investment priorities. The balance between quantitative and qualitative input was important to the research.

The line of inquiry for key informant interviews, though comprehensive and relevant to the research objectives, was generally too long for the amount of time that participants had available. The review of the Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Chart (Appendix 1) took a significant amount of time. It became apparent after the first few interviews that the best approach was to focus on specific asset areas in which the key informant would be expected to have knowledge and expertise in more depth, rather than to use the chart as a general survey instrument. The chart was also too detailed and overwhelming to be used in the residents' focus group discussions.

The Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Chart provided helpful, broad pictures of the neighbourhoods, especially as they became more complete through information garnered from successive interviews and focus groups. As discussed earlier, certain asset areas were lacking, such as businesses, transportation and mobility, safety, and planning, coordination and networking assets. Consideration should be given to organizing the assets into the broader asset groupings noted in the "Neighbourhood Findings" section: physical, social, diversity-related, service, and safety and mobility.

An overall presentation – including a summary of neighbourhood assets (using examples of assets), combined with physical maps of the area outlining the neighbourhood and summary information on the social, economic and cultural profile of the community – was well received by residents in the focus groups. As well, the short survey on the "three most valued things about this neighbourhood," which participants completed individually, was appreciated and provided important input to the project.

The maps, physically locating facilities and services in the study neighbourhoods, were useful as starting points for discussion in key informant interviews and with the service providers' focus groups. As noted above, some of the information on service locations was not correct and other information was missing. On occasion it was a challenge to move discussions away from correcting the maps to the other research questions. The maps were not revised during the project and were not used with the residents' focus groups except to show neighbourhood boundaries. Instead, the facilitators presented a general summary of the asset chart to stimulate discussion of facilitating and barrier conditions to use of services, supports and resources in the three neighbourhoods.

Finally, the research project team made efforts to engage local stakeholders in the process through plain- language communication and by outlining several major areas of interest and focus for discussion. These communications seemed to be

appreciated although they were not entirely successful at bringing people out to the meetings. Consideration should be given to other, more active engagement strategies for future work.

Outreach and Engagement

The three researchers took the same general approach to connect with and engage community stakeholders. All three found that outreach and engagement was more time-consuming and labour-intensive than originally anticipated. It involved a lot of planning, communication and organization in order to ensure community participation (e.g. arranging for meeting space, setting meeting dates that did not conflict with other community events). Outreach from late November to January also presented some constraints in scheduling focus group sessions, since the holiday season intervened in December, and poor winter weather interfered with some meetings in January.

The time and effort for organizing participation in interviews and focus groups was affected by the varying size and scale of the three neighbourhoods under study. Woburn has nine census tracts, compared with four in Roncesvalles and three in Henry Farm, and is three to four times the size of the other two in population. The larger area also presented the challenge of finding a mix of key informants who would give good coverage of all parts of the community. Unlike the other two neighbourhoods, Woburn does not have several central key local institutions or local leaders to provide a broad understanding of the whole neighbourhood.

Although operating from a common process framework, the three researchers found that they had to adapt the outreach and engagement approach to the demands and opportunities of local conditions. For example, there are two Business Improvement Associations in Roncesvalles representing two quite different business communities, and two focus groups were needed to accommodate the distinct viewpoints each would offer. In Woburn, there is no BIA, but a meeting of the Scarborough Chamber of Commerce, which included the study community, served as an opportunity to attempt to reach out to business people for input. Henry Farm also lacks a BIA, but the local business community is small and so centralized geographically that one business contact identified and helped to invite the other local business people to a meeting.

Participation

Community members who participated in both interviews and focus groups provided critically important information on the asset bases of their communities and were generally enthusiastic about contributing to the research. The level and reflectiveness of participation varied across the three study communities. The major variable in this regard seemed to be the size of the community. The Henry Farm and Roncesvalles communities are smaller than Woburn and have fairly tightly geographically defined neighbourhoods within their respective study areas. This helped to focus the invitation to the community meetings. Henry Farm and Roncesvalles have a number of commonly acknowledged central local organizations or institutions with staff or volunteer leaders familiar with other community service stakeholders and well connected to the residents that their organizations served. These local leaders played a helpful role in organizing focus group sessions and encouraged the attendance of local residents.

Woburn, composed of nine census tracts, presented both a local identification problem and a geographic scale problem. Unlike those in the other two study areas, community stakeholders in Woburn did not easily identify with Woburn as a neighbourhood or with clearly defined smaller areas within Woburn as closely defined neighbourhoods. (Notably, Woburn is the only one of the three study communities that does not fall completely within one city ward.) Finding centrally located community stakeholders to help promote focus group sessions with local residents proved problematic in Woburn, although several key informants made a special effort to be helpful in this regard. The first two residents' meetings were rescheduled because of lack of interest and the rescheduled meeting, which fell on the evening of a major snowstorm, attracted no participants. The second residents' meeting, on a Saturday, had about 15 confirmed participants but only four attended. The size of Woburn even presented the problem of resident accessibility to focus group sessions because of the travel distance to the meeting and the issue of public transit service. Service providers also commented that they faced similar issues in providing service to residents and engaging them in community processes.

The degree of development, interconnection and stability of the local service base was clearly an important factor in outreach and resident engagement. The Woburn experience illustrated this, but it was evident in certain circumstances in the other study communities as well. In Roncesvalles, the help of one local association supportive of the research broke down when an organizational crisis interfered. In Henry Farm, outreach to apartment dwellers in the more affluent part of the community was inhibited by their relative disconnection from the major local institutions and organizations, which related primarily to local homeowners. With more time, more direct outreach and canvassing strategies could have reached and engaged this segment of the neighbourhood.

In general, especially in Roncesvalles and Henry Farm, the level and diversity of participation in the residents' focus groups were impressive for the time and resources available. Manageable neighbourhood scale, neighbourhood identification and the quality of the community's organizational base seemed to be important considerations in mobilizing community interests and engagement.

Community Meeting Locations and Sites

Again, researchers in the three study communities experienced varying ease of access to local sites and meeting space for focus group sessions and neighbourhood soundings. Project researchers in Henry Farm and Roncesvalles found no lack of suitable meeting spaces, although other community demand for space presented some scheduling problems. Many required rental fees, provided for in the project's budget. Public libraries, childcare centres, health facilities, community centres (including a private recreation centre) and other spaces were offered in Henry Farm and Roncesvalles, and local service providers made every effort to accommodate the project's needs. For instance, the Parkway Forest YMCA Childcare Centre arranged food and beverages for a meeting, with costs later recovered from the project. Local public schools were also used, but they required applications and central administrative approval processes for permits, which took time and energy, especially with respect to securing proof of liability insurance coverage for the TDSB. Access to

audiovisual equipment for presentation of material was more of a problem in these community meetings.

An interesting unintended consequence of the project's request for community assistance in arranging meeting space was the commitment of staff at St. Joseph's Hospital, in the general Roncesvalles area, to initiate a policy to make hospital space available free of charge for community meetings. Thus, the project's research process on behalf of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force may have sparked a beneficial community outcome.

In contrast, meeting space was more difficult to arrange in Woburn. Even the Cedarbrae Public Library, a district library, has limited space. There are meeting rooms in one of two local Parks and Recreation sites, but the facility is a long walk from the bus stops and is along a road bordered by a park and a large high school. This is not a suitable evening meeting location for participants travelling by TTC. The second site, with one small meeting room, was available, but it is not easily accessible, being located far from the large recreation centre lobby, up two sets of stairs and past a very large skating area and viewing area.

There is no other obvious suitable meeting space in the area, except for many elementary schools and high schools with the attendant permit application and administrative approval requirements. These schools would likely appeal to the immediate local residents as meeting sites but may be inaccessible to the broader community. Unlike Roncesvalles and Henry Farm, where there is a smaller population, Woburn has 17 elementary schools and three high schools, many of which would not be convenient to the population at large.

Finally, light food and beverages were provided at the meetings. Participants were pleased that efforts were made to purchase the food locally. Residents also appreciated other supports for participation, such as coverage for babysitting and transit fares, although the requests for reimbursement by participants were significantly fewer than expected.

Co-Facilitation

Sensitive to community reaction to outside facilitators doing research at the neighbourhood level, the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force requested that this project recruit local people, reflective of the community, to co-facilitate the focus group sessions and neighbourhood soundings. Some difficulty was encountered in identifying good facilitators for each of the three study areas. A number of possible facilitators were proposed who knew the community but were not reflective of the neighbourhood. Still, local facilitators were recruited and oriented to co-facilitate with project researchers for the focus groups. They were paid for their facilitation services.

Local facilitators necessarily followed the lead of the project researcher, since the material and approach were new to them. It was appropriate for the project researcher to introduce the sessions and presentation material, which set up group discussion. Local facilitators directed the groups through structured questions, prepared in advance. During this time, the project researcher took notes and intervened occasionally with questions probing for more information. The

performance of local facilitators varied across the three communities in terms of their comfort and ease in probing for material themselves beyond the prepared questions.

On reflection, the recruitment and involvement of local co-facilitators was a valuable and instructive experience. However, their presence was not necessary for community acceptance once relationships with community stakeholders had been developed and support for organizing community meetings had been secured. In fact, the use of local facilitators did not seem to be a concern of community stakeholders in any of the three study communities. The association of the project researchers with the United Way and the City of Toronto helped establish supportive relationships and local cooperation. In Henry Farm on several occasions, the United Way and City of Toronto sponsorship of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force dispelled concern that a local developer was directing the research. But it is clear that, with more time for orientation and training, especially in probing for deeper information, using local facilitators would not only help develop community skills related to group process and asset mapping but would help transfer ownership for the initiative to the community as well.

Applicability to Other Neighbourhoods in Toronto

The application of this research process to other neighbourhoods in Toronto will need to reflect the results discussed above and recognize that neighbourhoods are not static. Since neighbourhoods evolve and change, the process will need to be applied in ways that appreciate the dynamics, variation and fluidity of neighbourhood life.

Similarly, neighbourhoods are unique places. The variation among the three study neighbourhoods is considerable, yet there were some common findings and conclusions about investment. This suggests the potential of an asset mapping process like the one developed for this project that balances quantitative and qualitative input and that seeks out local knowledge and insight. Although the specifics of the application of the process and tools used need to be adjusted within each neighbourhood, there is potential for broader application to other neighbourhoods.

In particular, the Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Matrix provides a framework for assessing factors and conditions that affect the use of neighbourhood assets and is an important foundation for neighbourhood-level analysis. It will be stronger with adjustments to the range of infrastructure, like community development and planning, based on results from the research in the three study neighbourhoods.

The asset map produced in this project relies on people's knowledge of their changing community, and as such its usefulness may be time-limited. However, as an information collection and analytical tool, it provides a useful framework for determining what is present and absent, and what barriers may exist in relation to community infrastructure.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Chart
Appendix 2 Key Informant Interview Template
Appendix 3 Focus Groups Template — Service Provider
Appendix 4 Focus Groups Template — Residents
Appendix 5 Focus Groups Template — Business
Appendix 6 Neighbourhood Asset Matrix
Appendix 7 Neighbourhood Sounding Template

Appendix 1: Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Chart

Neighbourhood Asset Assessment Chart

What are we missing from our map of the Woburn neighbourhood? We have included a wide range of possible services and supports for you to consider when you review the map. There is space for you to make notes or highlight issues that you wish to raise with us in the interview.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE	LOCATION		COMMENTS • Importance to neighbourhood residents? • Any barriers to use of asset? Other comments?
	Within Neighbourhood	Outside Neighbourhood	
HEALTH			
Hospital including emergency/urgent care			
Walk-in health clinic			
Local public health unit			
Community health center			
Mental health program(s)			
Other health services/resource			

FOOD AND NUTRITION			
Pre-natal nutrition education program(s)			
School breakfast programs			
Community cooking/dining programs			
Food co-operative(s)			
Food bank(s)			
Other food and nutrition service/support/resource			
HOUSING			
Housing co-operative(s)			
Supportive Housing for disabled/seniors/mental health			
Social Housing			
Emergency overnight shelter(s)			
Other social housing service/support/resource			

EDUCATION			
Primary schools			
Secondary schools			
Local public library			
ESL program(s)			
Literacy program(s)			
Other local educational resource/support			
EMPLOYMENT			
Gov't Employment Office			
Local employment training program(s)			
Local job-finding, search, career counseling programs			
Other employment service/support/resource			
CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES			

Child care center(s)			
Family resource center(s)			
Pre- &/or After-school programs			
Early Years Centre			
Family counselling/guidance			
Other children's and family service/support/resource			
SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL			
Community centre(s)			
Local public arena(s)			
Local public park(s)			
Local sports program(s)			
Local arts and cultural activities/programs			
Local recreational groups and organizations			
Other social-recreational service/support/resource			

CIVIC AND AFFINITY GROUPS			
Churches			
Temples			
Mosques			
Other places of worship			
Local service clubs (e.g. Lion's, Rotary, Junior Achievement)			
Residents' groups (e.g. ratepayers, Nbhd. And Tenants' Assoc.)			
Other civic and affinity groups			
PROTECTIVE SERVICES			
Local police station or police program			
Local community safety program(s)			
Community legal clinic(s)			
Legal Aid Ontario Certified Law Office/Lawyer			

Local rights and advocacy groups			
Other protective service/support/resource			
SOCIAL SERVICES & CRISIS INTERVENTION			
Immigrant Settlement Supports			
Transitional housing (e.g. domestic abuse shelter)			
Specialized individual and family counseling			
In-home care and support			
Family respite program(s)			
Other crisis and social service/support/resource			
POPULATION SPECIFIC			
Women			
Children			
Youth			
Seniors			
Low Income/Poor			

Racial minorities			
Ethno-cultural minorities			
Immigrants and/or refugees			
Religious minorities			
Aboriginal			
Disabilities			
Gay/Lesbian/Transgendered			
Other population specific group/resource			

Appendix 2: Key Informant Interview Template

Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force

Research Project: Asset Mapping of Three Neighbourhoods in Toronto

Key Informant Interview

November 2004

My name is _____ and I am part of a research project for the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force sponsored by the United Way and the City of Toronto. The Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force is committed to ensuring that Toronto's neighbourhoods are vibrant, engaging places that offer a good quality of life and plentiful economic, employment and social opportunities to their residents. The Task Force is undertaking a number of pieces of research to better understand communities and models for investing in communities. More information on the Task Force and it's work is available at their website at http://www.strongneighbourhoods.ca/

My research team is working in three Toronto neighbourhoods, Woburn, Roncesvalles and Henry Farm, to discover how local community leaders identify and assess the strengths, or assets, of their neighbourhoods and what the challenges are for the community to realize fully the benefits of these assets.

We are starting out in _____ by talking to local people like you from key neighbourhood organizations and groups to get an overview of the neighbourhood. Later in November and December, we will be organizing and conducting a series of focus groups with local people to get a more complete sense of how they see their neighbourhood's strengths and challenges. In January we will hold a 'sounding' to complete the process. This last meeting will involve all focus group participants in a review of their input and discussion of community issues and priorities for investment.

I have attached a copy of the interview template for your review in advance of our discussion. You do not need to complete the questionnaire – I will take notes when we talk.

I would be pleased to answer any questions about the research – you can make a note of them and ask me when I talk to you or you can call _____ or email me at _____.

Many thanks for participating in our project,

Researchers Name

Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force

Research Project: Asset Mapping of Three Neighbourhoods in Toronto

Key Informant – Interview Template

1. Identification and Neighbourhood Location/Role

Please briefly describe your position in the Woburn neighbourhood and the role and function of your organization. Could we have a copy of your annual report or other agency information.

2. Overview Impressions of Neighbourhood

(a) How would you define the boundaries of Woburn? Is Woburn the commonly used name for this neighbourhood? If not, what is?

(b) How would you generally describe Woburn to a visitor/non-resident?

(c) Is the community changing? How? What are the key trends that will affect the community in the next five or so years?

(d) In your opinion, what are the three major strengths facing the Woburn neighbourhood? What are three challenges?

(e) In your opinion, are local residents proud of the neighbourhood they live in? Why or why not?

3. Natural and Physical Environment and Mobility/Access

(a) How would you describe the natural and physical environment in Woburn?

(b) In your opinion, do neighbourhood residents have good physical access to services and amenities within the neighbourhood's boundaries?

(c) Do you think that Woburn has reasonably good access to important services and amenities not situated within its boundaries?

(d) How accessible are other parts of the City by public transit from this neighbourhood?

4. Local Economy

(a) How would you describe the economic and/or employment health of the neighbourhood and its residents?

(b) Do you see any changes occurring now or on the horizon that will make a positive or negative difference to the Woburn economically?

(c) Do you know of local businesses that have any special relationships with community groups or local community service agencies?

5. Neighbourhood and Community Assets

As part of this project, we are trying to map the range of neighbourhood assets that are available to local residents. We define neighbourhood assets to include public, non-profit and private facilities, services, programs and activities within the neighbourhood boundaries that contribute to the health, education and social well-being of local residents. Community assets are the same resources located outside the neighbourhood boundaries but may still be relatively easily accessible to neighbourhood residents (e.g. easy walking distance, regular public transit access).

I have attached a Neighbourhood Asset Assessment chart to this interview template. Please identify any neighbourhood and community assets that you are aware of that are not already on the chart. Also, in the space provided offer any comments you wish on assets that are on the chart. We will review with you the chart and a draft neighbourhood and community assets map when doing the interview.

(a) Are there barriers to the use of the assets identified in the chart? Are there factors that encourage or facilitate use of the assets?

(b) What neighbourhood asset or assets do residents seem to use a lot? Why?

(c) Are there programs, services, and facilities in outside the neighbourhood or in adjacent neighbourhoods which residents use? Are there barriers that restrict or prevent use of these assets besides distance from neighbourhood?

(d) What services or supports are delivered to residents in this neighbourhood by the City of Toronto or by other citywide service providers (e.g. City of Toronto Public Health Department, Children' Aid Societies, CAMH)?

(e) Do the existing neighbourhood and community service providers work together for the benefit of local residents? Do you have any examples?

6. <u>Leads to Information and People</u>

(a) Do you know of any research or studies with information about this neighbourhood and its strengths and weaknesses?

(b) Can you identify and suggest local people knowledgeable about this neighbourhood in the following categories whom we could invite to our focus groups:

- Local residents
- Community service sector
- Local business sector (local businesses, organizations, BIA)

(c) Can you identify local leaders or staff in local organizations who would be a good facilitator at our focus groups?

(d) Can you suggest good local sites to hold our focus groups and community assemblies?

Thank you for your time and assistance!

Appendix 3: Focus Groups Template – Community Service Providers

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS TASK FORCE

Neighbourhood Asset Mapping Project

Focus Groups Template - Community Service Providers

Objectives:

- To validate the picture of the neighbourhood asset base assembled from our research.
- To probe further for strengths and weaknesses in the neighbourhood asset base.
- To identify facilitating and barrier conditions to the development of a strong neighbourhood asset base.
- To test resident response to indicators and measures of neighbourhood vitality.

Process:

(1) Welcome, introductions and overview of the session.

(2) Overview of Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force – objectives and research program.

(3) Presentation of neighbourhood statistical profile and clarifying questions, comments, and observations.

(4) Presentation and discussion of neighbourhood asset map, highlighting major contributions from the key informant interviews (validity check).

Focus Group Questions:

1. *Neighbourhood Description*:
   Did we get it right?
   Does our definition of the neighbourhood match your knowledge of the neighbourhood? (boundaries)
   Does our description match your understanding?
   Are there any services or facilities that we missed?

2. *Neighbourhood Changes:*
   Has this picture changed significantly in last five years? If so, how? Why?
   What changes do you anticipate affecting this asset map over the next five to ten years?
   (e.g. population growth, change in demographic mix, demand on services, major local developments, economic dynamics, etc.)

3. *Informal Networks and Partnerships:*
   What important groups and activities are not portrayed in this map?
   (e.g. unorganized and informal social or cultural activity, local business relationship with school)

   What partnership arrangements among services and groups are not shown here?

4. *Inclusiveness:*
   Can you identify any particular sub-groups in the neighbourhood lacking important supports or ready access to the local supports in this map? If so, what are the barriers?
   (e.g. differences by age, gender, income, employment status, ethno-racial/cultural identity, family status, citizenship status, language skills, disability, housing status, sexual orientation, etc.)

   Are there any sub-groups in the neighbourhood experiencing prejudicial or discriminatory treatment – within the neighbourhood and/or outside of it? If so, how could this be eliminated or reduced?

5. *Social Capital:*
   Bonding: What kinds of things create a sense of togetherness among the residents of this neighbourhood?
   (e.g. regular events, activities, celebrations, central community institutions, shared communications like a newsletter, etc.)

   Bridging: How does this neighbourhood connect with other neighbourhoods, groups and communities?

   Linking: What useful and influential connections does the neighbourhood have with City Hall, school boards, or other recognized institutions and authorities?

6. *Participation and Leadership:*
   What opportunities exist in the neighbourhood for local residents to become actively involved in community life? How active are local residents in this way?

   How could local residents be supported to become more active in community life?

   Who takes a leadership role in the neighbourhood? How are local residents supported in assuming leadership roles?

7. *Neighbourhood Vitality Indicators*:
   What would be signs or evidence that your neighbourhood is strong and healthy?

   [Present GHK indicators] What do you think of these statistical indicators of the vitality and strength of your neighbourhood? (Probe for: relevance, qualifiers, and better alternatives)

Conclusions and Thanks:
Indicate plans for resident focus groups in January and request the assistance of those present in identifying and inviting a group of local residents reflective of the neighbourhood to these focus groups.

Thank host and all present for their help with the Strong Neighbourhoods research.

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS TASK FORCE

Neighbourhood Asset Mapping

Service Provider Focus Group

What do you think are the three most important assets to residents who live in this neighbourhood?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Appendix 4: Focus Groups Template – Residents

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS TASK FORCE

Neighbourhood Asset Mapping Project

Focus Groups Template - Residents

Objectives:

1. To validate the picture of the neighbourhood asset base assembled from our research.
2. To probe further for strengths and weaknesses in the neighbourhood asset base.
3. To identify facilitating and barrier conditions to the development of a strong neighbourhood asset base.
4. To test resident response to indicators and measures of neighbourhood vitality.

Process:

1. Welcome, introductions and overview of the session.

2. Overview of Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force – objectives and research program

3. Summary social and economic neighbourhood profile and clarifying questions, comments, and observations.

4. Summary and discussion of neighbourhood asset base.

5. Focus Group Questions

General Questions:

1. Did we get it right?
   Does our definition of the neighbourhood match yours? *(boundaries)*
   Does our description of the neighbourhood match your understanding of it?
   Are there any services or facilities that we missed?

2. Where do people in the community go if they need help? *(e.g. an agency, service, person, etc)* Are they likely to go first to a particular person or place? Do they go to a neighbour or a service provider?

Is there a centre of activity in your community? A place where people gather or do things together? Are there a number of places? Please describe them?

3. Are there barriers that stop/prevent people from using community services and facilities? *(e.g. transit, cost, physical environment like wide roads, dark streets, parks, perception of service, etc)*

   Are there conditions that support/enable people to use community services and facilities?

   Are there certain groups of people who have greater difficulty accessing services? *(e.g. seniors, ethno cultural groups, disabled, linguistic groups)* Why? Are there certain groups of people who regularly use services?

Social Capital:

4. *Bonding*: In your opinion, are people involved in the Woburn neighbourhood? Is there a sense of togetherness among residents?

   In what ways (volunteer, use programs are people involved)? Are there community wide events? Are all people involved or are people left out? Who? Why? *(e.g. regular events, activities, celebrations, central community institutions, shared communications like a newsletter, etc.)*

   Bridging: How does this neighbourhood connect with other neighbourhoods, groups and communities? *(e.g. community activities and events, services, shopping, newsletters, etc)*

   Linking: What useful and influential connections does the neighbourhood have with City Hall, school boards, or other recognized institutions and authorities?

5. Is your community a good place to live? Why? Why not?
   What one thing could be done to make it a better place?

Neighbourhood Vitality Indicators:

6. What would be signs or evidence that your neighbourhood is strong and healthy?

7. [*Present GHK indicators*] What do you think of these statistical indicators of the vitality and strength of your neighbourhood? *(Probe for: relevance, qualifiers, better alternatives)*

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS TASK FORCE

Neighbourhood Asset Mapping

Residents Focus Group

What do you value most about your neighbourhood?

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Appendix 5: Focus Groups Template – Business

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS TASK FORCE

Neighbourhood Asset Mapping Project

Focus Groups Template - Business

Objectives:

- To validate and refine the picture of the neighbourhood asset base assembled from our research.
- To probe further for strengths and weaknesses in the neighbourhood asset base.
- To identify facilitating and barrier conditions to the development of a strong neighbourhood asset base.
- To test local business response to indicators and measures of neighbourhood vitality.

Process:

1. Welcome, introductions and overview of the session

2. Overview of Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force – objectives and research program

3. Brief and general summary social and economic neighbourhood profile and clarifying questions, comments, and observations.

4. Summary and discussion of neighbourhood asset base (using a heavily abbreviated version of the asset map with a few examples).

5. Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions:

Neighbourhood Description:

1. Does our definition of the neighbourhood match yours? *(boundaries)*
Does our description of the neighbourhood match your understanding of it?
How else would you add to the description of this neighbourhood?

Participation and Community:

2. What is the centre of activity in your community? Is there a place where people gather or do things together? Are there a number of places? Please describe them?

3. What stops/keeps people from using the things the community has to offer? *(e.g. transit, cost, physical environment like wide roads, dark streets, parks, perception of service etc)*

4. What helps/aids local people to use the things the community has to offer?

Inclusiveness:

5. Are there certain groups of people who have greater difficulty accessing the things the community offers? *(e.g. seniors, ethno cultural groups, disabled, linguistic groups)* Why?

Social Capital:

6. *Bonding*: In your opinion, are people involved in the _____ neighbourhood? Is there a sense of togetherness among residents?

   In what ways are people involved? Are there community wide events? Are all people involved or are people left out? Who? Why?
   (e.g. regular events, activities, celebrations, central community institutions, shared communications like a newsletter, etc.)

   Bridging: How does this neighbourhood connect with other neighbourhoods, groups and communities? *(e.g. community activities and events, services, shopping, newsletters, etc)*

   Linking: What useful and influential connections does the neighbourhood have with City Hall, school boards, or other recognized institutions and authorities?

Attractiveness:

7. Is your community a good place to work and/or own a business? Why? Why not?
   What one thing could be done to make it a better place?

Neighbourhood Vitality Indicators:

8. What would be signs or evidence that your neighbourhood is strong and healthy?

9. [*Present GHK indicators*] What do you think of these statistical indicators of the vitality and strength of your neighbourhood? *(Probe for: relevance, qualifiers, better alternatives)*

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS TASK FORCE

Neighbourhood Asset Mapping Project

Business Focus Groups

What do you value most about this neighbourhood?

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

Appendix 6

Neighbourhood Asset Matrix

Applied to Henry Farm Neighbourhood

Variables for Use of Assets	HEALTH	FOOD/NUTRITION	HOUSING
Availability	**+ North York General Hospital – After hrs clinic used a lot** **= child couns at NYG moved to Branson** **= no public health unit** **= not enough pediatricians**	**+ Parkway Plaza IGA grocery store** **+ OEYC healthy cooking prog** **+OCSA BBN prog** **= no local food coops or community dining or food banks**	**+ TCHC bldgs north of Sheppard**
Proximity	**+ walk-in clinic at 5 Fairview Mall** **+ some mental health programs via Oriole Community Services Assoc.**	**= OEYC and OCSA distant from nbhd.** **= regional foodbank dist'n out of Lansing**	
Accessibility	**+ PHN scheduled into schools** **= but not as regularly as previously**		**+ COSTI advocacy support for people facing eviction (out of OCSA)** **+ Willowdale Community Legal for some tenant advocacy** **= very high rents in apt. bldgs**
Capacity			
Quality	**= "walk-in" clinic at Prkwy Plaza but requires an appointment**	**+ Parkway Plaza IGA sensitive to multi-cultural food preferences**	**= apt bldgs in state of disrepair and poorly maintained**

+ Signifies Facilitating Conditions to use of asset
= Signifies Barrier Conditions to use of asset

Variables for Use of Assets	EDUCATION	CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES	EMPLOYMENT
Availability	**++ Forest Manor PS + Literacy prog + ESL & LINC**	**++ Parkway Forest YMCA Childcare + Pre- & After-school progs – YCC, Oriole CC & schools + Don Valley East EYC + Two Montessori schools + Fairview Library children's programs**	**+ Yorklands Employment Resource Centre – HRDC & TDSB + Yorklands Youth Emp + Tropicana AYCE**
Proximity	**++ Forest Manor PS – centre of nbhd + High Schools nearby + St. Timothy's SS nearby + Fairview Library & educ progs = but distant for children on own + ESL prog at school, library, Oriole, Working Women's Ctr, Eunice's**	**= Don Valley East EYC on east side of Hwy #404 but has satellite progs = Montessori schools at a distance**	**= Yorklands and AYCE on east side of #404**
Accessibility	**++Forest Manor PS – daily community use in evgs & wknds + SEPT worker at Fairview Library in summer months = wait lists for ESL**	**+ Oriole CC partners with daycare and schools for pre-and after-school progs = wait lists for childcare & pre-/after school progs = Montessori school fees**	**= EI eligibility restrictions barrier to use of immigrant s without job record because lack "Cdn experience"**
Capacity	**= Forest Manor PS – 118% capacity = Lack community space for more ESL = Lost family Resource Centre**	**= Lost Toronto Public health parenting program at school = Forest Manor lost Seneca ECE prog – needed portable fro classes**	
Quality	**++ Forest Manor PS – Recognized for educat'l achievement + SEPT worker (CICSIW) at school ++ staff at school, library, OCC, WWCC**	**+ high YCC and EYC sensitivity to multi-cultural and multi-lingual families – e.g. staffing**	

+ Signifies Facilitating Conditions to use of asset
= Signifies Barrier Conditions to use of asset

Variables for Use of Assets	SOCIAL & RECREATIONAL	MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION	SOCIAL SERVICES & CRISIS INTERVENTION
Availability	**++ Eunice's Swim prog and Recreation Centre** **++ Park and sports pad (School & Parks & Rec collaboration)** **= local demand higher than existing local rec progs** **= no good local youth rec prog** **+ Oriole Community Centre, arena & pool** **+ Fairview Library theatre and cultural progs** **+ Fairview Mall cinemas** **+ Yorklands school swim program** **+ EYC play and recreational progs fro families**	**++ Don Mills Subway Station on Sheppard Line** **++ Good and regular arterial road bus routes**	**= OCSA service partnerships for immigrant support – e.g. COSTI** **= lost child and family counselling from North York General** **= no local non-profit marital counseling**
Proximity	**= Distance & transportation barriers to most of above – esp. for young children – Oriole CC, EYC**	**+ Parkway Forest known as "walking community"**	
Accessibility	**= fees for private rec centre**		
Capacity	**= Rec Ctr bldg – limited and not flexible use of space** **= Oriole CC space limits – expansion planned**		
Quality	**+ expert swim instruction at Eunice's – hire local youth on staff**		

+ Signifies Facilitating Conditions to use of asset
= Signifies Barrier Conditions to use of asset

Variables for Use of Assets	PROTECTIVE SERVICES	CIVIC & AFFINITY GROUPS
Availability	**+ Police Division #33 – Community-Police Liaison Committee** **+ Community Police Office runs programs at Forest Manor School** **+ Willowdale Community Legal Services north of Sheppard near Fairview Mall** **+ LAO lawyer in Fairview Mall** **+ Community Information Fairview Tax Clinics in Fairview Mall**	**+ Toronto Community Evangelical Church Pastor at Eunice's and runs weekend services** **+ St Matthew's Anglican** **+ Catholic and other churches north of Sheppard** **+ Chinese Baptist Church** **+ Korean Christian Church** **= No mosques or Muslim worship facilities in local area with 26% Muslim religion** **++ many local population specific groups – OCSA**
Proximity		**= Chinese Baptist Church & Korean Christian Church – east of #404 but serve wider communities**
Accessibility	**+ OCSA makes referrals to community legal clinic**	**= cost for use of community space for worship services can be barrier** **+ Schools, library, community centre provide space for worship but = have to charge**
Capacity	**= business community feels more police foot patrol and car coverage is needed**	**= still lack of available community space for worship services**
Quality		

+ Signifies Facilitating Conditions to use of asset
= Signifies Barrier Conditions to use of asset

Appendix 7: Neighbourhood Sounding Template

STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS TASK FORCE

Neighbourhood Asset Mapping Project

Neighbourhood Sounding

Objectives:

- To report back to focus group participants and other community stakeholders on key findings and issues from focus group research.
- To do a final check with community stakeholders on our interpretation of research findings.
- To facilitate a community discussion of the implications of research findings and analysis for potential investment strategies which would strengthen the quality of neighbourhood life.

Process:

1. Welcome and overview of the session
2. Review of the objectives and research process of Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force
3. Presentation of Findings and Emerging Issues: Map with neighbourhood boundaries
    - Socio-economic overview
    - Summary of neighbourhood strengths and weaknesses in terms of asset base as elicited from focus groups – show range of Asset categories from Neighbourhood Asset Chart (see attachment)
    - Summary report of top three things focus group participants most valued about their neighbourhood (see attachment)

4. Plenary discussion of research findings

5. Small Group (or large group) Discussions
    - *What are the top three most pressing needs in your neighbourhood?*
    - *If you could direct where "investment" should go in your community, what would be your three priorities?*

    If small group, report needs and investment priorities identified in groups back to plenary meeting and plenary discussion/commentary

6. Summarize, Thank participants and Conclude

Neighbourhood Asset Base

Types of Assets	Examples
HEALTH	**hospital, clinic, health centre, public health unit**
FOOD & NUTRITION	**grocery/convenience stores, pre-natal programs, food co-op, food bank, community dining**
HOUSING	**home ownership and rental, housing co-op, supportive housing**
EDUCATION	**primary & secondary schools, public library program, ESL & literacy program**
EMPLOYMENT	**local jobs, gov't employment office, local employment counselling & training**
CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES	**child care centre, EYC, pre-and after-school program**
SOCIAL & RECREATIONAL	**community centre, sports field/facilities, arts & cultural programs, entertainment facilities**
SOCIAL SERVICES & CRISIS INTERVENTION	**immigrant settlement supports, in-home care, family respite, individual/marital counselling**
MOBILITY/TRANSPORTATION	**subway station, bus routes, road system, sidewalks**
PROTECTIVE SERVICES	**police, community safety programs, legal clinic/LAO**
CIVIC & AFFINITY GROUPS	**faith groups & facilities, local service clubs, residents association**
POPULATION SPECIFIC SUPPORT GROUPS	**women, children's, seniors, disability, ethno-racial, immigrant groups**

Facilitating and Barrier Conditions to Neighbourhood Assets

Asset Variables	Facilitating Conditions to Use of Asset	Barrier Conditions to Use of Asset
(1) **Availability:** - existing or absent - hours of operation (daily, weekly, seasonal?)		
(2) **Proximity:** - location in or near nbhd (1 km walking distance) - natural or constructed features of nbhd - favourability of local arterial road system - availability/frequency of transit to service		
(3) **Accessibility:** - eligibility requirements - cost factors - waiting lists		
(4) **Capacity:** - physical space - physical conditions - physical amenities - budget levels - staff levels - volunteer use		
(5) **Quality:** - responsiveness - language capability - cultural sensitivity - appropriate expertise/skill base		

Important Neighbourhood Assets - Summary

Service Providers - What do you think are the three most important assets to residents who live in this neighbourhood?

Residents – what do you value most about your neighbourhood?