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# Inner Suburbs at Stake:
## Investing in Social Infrastructure in Scarborough
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is now impossible to ignore that Toronto is becoming a divided city. Stacks of research confirm trends that are plainly visible in the urban landscape: social polarization, spatial segregation, and a deepening racialization of poverty are defining features of our city's social geography. These trajectories come together in powerful ways in the city's inner suburbs. Increasingly home to communities of people living in concentrated poverty, the residents of low-income inner suburban communities are also increasingly people of colour.

These trends are not new. As early as 1979, the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto reported these emerging patterns, sounding a call to government, service providers and researchers. These trends are also not operating in isolation. Despite the widespread concern for "suburban decline," population change and disinvestment in the inner suburbs are part of metropolitan scale urban change that is also propelling the downtown core to become wealthier and whiter. This latter trend is rarely understood as a problem, even as it too is constitutive of a dividing city.

Despite the longstanding nature of these patterns and their metropolitan scale, they have garnered a flurry of public and policy attention over the past few years that focus specifically on the inner suburbs. The most prominent initiative – crafted jointly by the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto – is the "Priority Neighbourhood" (PN) strategy. The PN strategy has two central aims: to invest in underserviced communities and to transform the way in which local residents, city staff and service providers participate in community planning. Targeted investment is geared toward building physical and social infrastructure in underserviced communities, while the emphasis on community-based planning and resident engagement aims to cultivate collaboration across non-profit, public, and resident organizations, spur creative projects and initiatives, and empower residents.

The PN framework has important goals and has achieved notable success, yet it is also infused with perennial problems. Architects of the PN strategy mobilize a controversial literature on "neighbourhood effects," which brackets the broader context for neighbourhood change and may place responsibility for poverty on the residents of low-income neighbourhoods. As critics of this literature have charged, the exclusive focus on the neighbourhood scale misdiagnoses poverty as a purely local problem rather than as a complex problem that manifests itself locally. Solutions to poverty that focus exclusively on the local scale sideline well-documented causes of segregation, polarization, and racialization that stem from broader forces such as the economy and government policy. Ironically, approaches rooted in the neighbourhood effects literature often avoid addressing poverty directly, focusing instead on cultural or behavioural change such as the cultivation of civic engagement. Finally, spatially targeted policy oversimplifies the complexity of social networks and everyday life, creating arbitrary boundaries for residents and agencies in accessing resources.

For targeted investment to be effective, it needs to be seen as one ingredient in a broader strategy for change and not an end in itself.

Indeed, this report finds that some "neighbourhood strategies" are more effective than others. Drawing on a pilot study that contrasts the experiences of the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) priority neighbourhood, with Parkdale, a downtown community that faces similar social and economic challenges but which did not receive PN designation, the report demonstrates that how we diagnose the problems in neighbourhoods matters profoundly in how we respond. This research further suggests that there are different ways of understanding neighbourhoods active within the PN strategy. According to residents and community workers, some ways of making sense of neighbourhoods and making change in neighbourhoods are more effective and responsive than others, and this report explores these strategies and practices in some detail. It includes findings about both effective and ineffective strategies.

Effective neighbourhood strategies cultivate social infrastructure. They stem from explanations for concentrated poverty that assign responsibility to government policy and economic change at the local, regional, national, and global scale. They restore investment in human services and facilities in areas that have been overlooked, but they also advocate change at scales much larger than the local in order to respond to social polarization, segregation, and the racialization of poverty. Effective strategies for neighbourhoods are tailor-made for local conditions by local communities. They are accountable and inclusive, provide meaningful skills development that responds directly to identified gaps and needs, and they explicitly address persistent inequalities such as those that are manifest along the lines of race, mental health, class, and gender.

Ineffective neighbourhood strategies in Toronto tend to drain local capacity. They often assume cultural explanations for concentrated poverty that assign responsibility to low-income neighbourhoods or the people who live in them. Ineffective neighbourhood

strategies download responsibility for problems experienced in neighbourhoods to the neighbourhood itself and yet extend little or no voice and authority to residents of those neighbourhoods. Ineffective strategies take a top-down, cookie-cutter approach to neighbourhood investment, undermining the agency and autonomy of the communities they ostensibly aim to support.
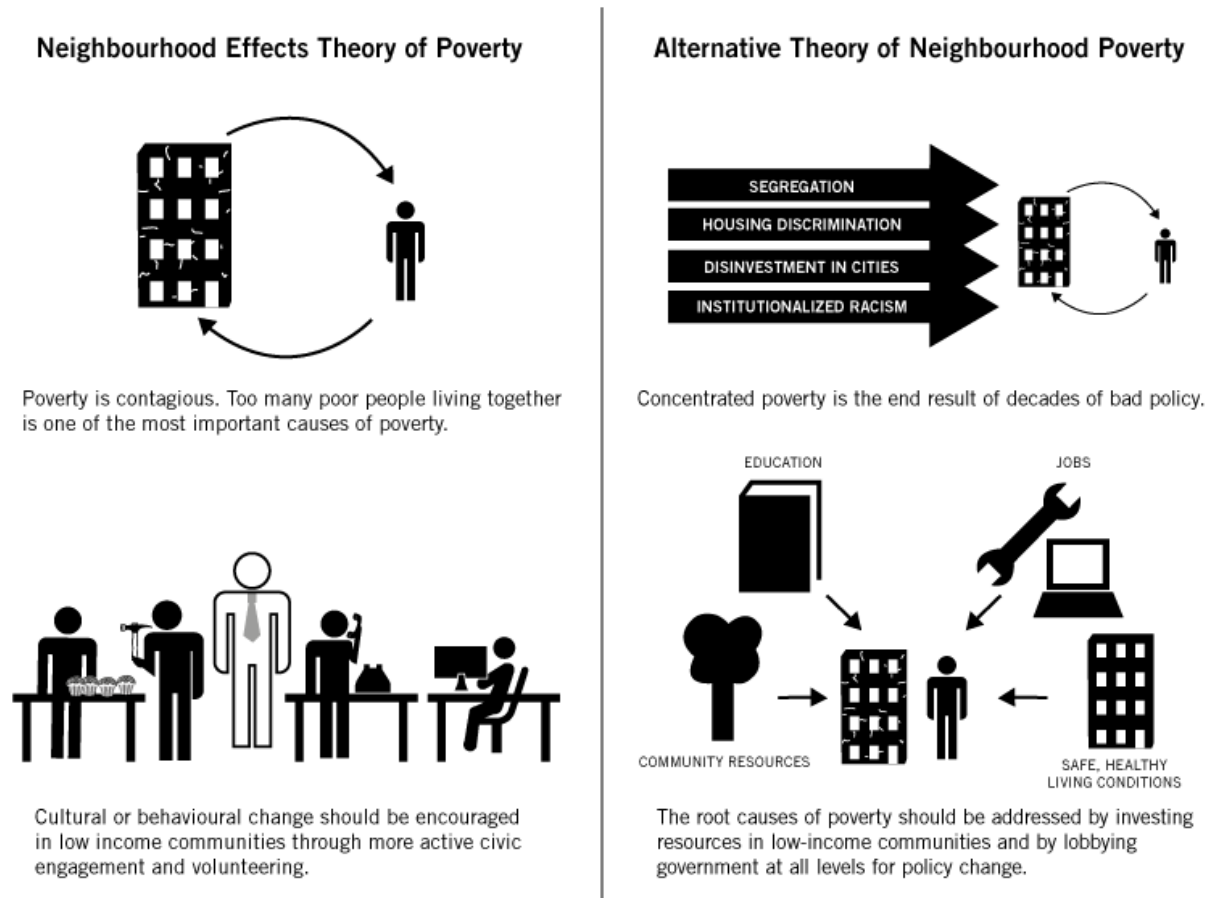


**Figure 1:** Two Theories of Neighbourhood Poverty (*adapted from* Right to the City, *2010*)

# Selected Findings

Drawing on interviews with residents, community activists, service agencies, and non-profit funders, this report offers a series of findings:

## 1.  SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTHEAST SCARBOROUGH

*The widely heralded success of the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park community in building social infrastructure generally stems from efforts that are supported by but predate Priority Neighbourhood (PN) designation.*

PN designation supports the cultivation of social infrastructure but did not initiate it. Active and organized residents, a collaborative approach to community planning and service provision, a common space for meeting, and supportive and flexible funding have been the key ingredients in the ongoing success in Southeast Scarborough.

## 2.  INVESTING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS

*Investment in underserviced neighbourhoods is a critical corrective to decades of underinvestment and population change.*

Effective targeted investment enhances the social and physical infrastructure of neighbourhoods that need it most. Strengthening social infrastructure connects residents to a range of skills, knowledge, and networks that are typically beyond reach in communities that experience persistent underinvestment and marginalization.

*Targeted investment is a crucial corrective to underinvestment, but it is not in and of itself a strategy for poverty reduction.*

The purported success of place-based strategies in poverty reduction is unfounded. Research cited to support their effectiveness in other countries documents the relocation not the reduction of poverty.

Ineffective neighbourhood investment often pivots on erroneous assumptions about low-income communities, which misdiagnose poverty as a local problem of "neighbourhood effects" rather than a broader problem that manifests itself at the neighbourhood scale. Solutions emanating from such a narrow focus are also highly localized, sidelining well-documented causes of segregation, polarization, and racialization in the economy and government policy, and leading to detrimental impacts on the ground.

*Targeted investment oversimplifies the spatial complexity of social networks and everyday life.*

Such strategies create arbitrary boundaries for residents and non-profit agencies in accessing resources. Targeted investment creates particular challenges for social service agencies outside of priority neighbourhoods in accessing resources, even as these agencies may often serve residents from within priority neighbourhoods.

## 3. PLANNING NEIGHBOURHOODS DIFFERENTLY

*The PN emphasis on community planning and resident engagement can foster innovative collaborations and creative initiatives, and can transform power relations in communities.*
Initiatives like the Neighbourhood Action Partnership support information sharing and collaborative planning across different organizations and sectors.

*Despite emphasis on "capacity building" and "resident engagement," organizations do not always incorporate residents into planning processes or decision making in meaningful ways.*
Collaborative forms of planning are constrained if persistent inequalities between community partners are unacknowledged or unaddressed. Diverse and effective representation of the local community in participatory governance processes is key.

*Popular theories of "social capital" that inform the PN framework underplay the political nature of marginality.*
These theories suggest that poor people lack either the engagement or appropriate skills to make positive change. Such theories neglect persistent barriers to advancement such as racism, and they often conceal residents' significant investment of time and labour, and may encourage a form of exploitative volunteerism.

*Funding community development in a supportive and sustainable manner is critical for cultivating new skills and networks.*
The reliance on project funding is debilitating to organizational and community development. Alternatively, funders who are flexible in their evaluations and do not rely on strict quantitative or accountancy models of success enhance the capacity of small, grassroots groups to deliver effective community programs and supports.

# Selected Recommendations

This report offers the following recommendations, which are elaborated upon in chapter 5:

## 1. INCREASE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

*Investing in the social and physical infrastructure of under-resourced communities is critically important and could be enhanced if the recommendations below were addressed.*

## 2. SUPPORT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

*The City's Neighbourhood Action Partnership (NAP) holds enormous potential for coordinated community planning. However, without the unpaid and unrecognized work of community organizations, the NAP would not operate with success.*

i.  The City should fund the NAP more adequately so that costs are not borne disproportionately by community agencies. This would also support more equitable participation across groups with highly diverse access to resources.
ii.  The City's community development officer should be allocated office space within the community. This would make the NAP a more accessible and community-based partnership and would alleviate work that is currently offloaded onto community organizations.
iii.  City departments need to prioritize the work of the NAP in its own operations and ensure that this is reflected in the dedication of staff time to the activities of the partnership.
iv.  A resident caucus of the NAP should be developed and supported to ensure autonomous and supportive space for community members to develop a voice on neighbourhood planning issues.
v.  A NAP network should be cultivated in ALL city neighbourhoods, regardless of PN designation.

## 3. CREATE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS RESIDENT LEADERSHIP

*While there is unanimous support for resident engagement in local community development work, some models of engagement risk exploiting residents' time and draining their capacities.*

i.  Neighbourhood organizations and funding agencies that are active in the community should develop clear lines of accountability to the community and direct mechanisms for feedback from the community.
ii.  Organizations and funding agencies must ensure that residents have opportunities for meaningful participation in all policy and program design affecting their

neighbourhood. Effective resident engagement must entail support for resident empowerment.

iii. Neighbourhood organizations and funding agencies should cultivate diverse participation in community and organizational governance. The provision of training, mentorship, payment (if warranted), access to childcare, communications technology (e.g., for receiving meeting minutes), and opportunities for skill sharing are key to supporting diverse participation. Creating the conditions that support residents in acquiring leadership skills should be a central goal.

iv. Long meetings with formal agendas are often necessary but are not always encouraging to resident engagement. Multiple forms of participation should be explored.

## 4. ADDRESS THE COMPLEXITIES AND PERSISTENCE OF RACISM

*Residents report persistent discrimination as a major barrier in their lives, particularly on the grounds of race, but also according to mental health status, gender and income level. Most organizations subscribe to values of inclusion and equity, but direct commitments to social justice and anti-oppression in community development is needed.*

i. Develop strategies to address the persistent experiences of racism in the city and the local community. Careful attention to the specific experiences and perceptions of diverse groups (perhaps most urgently, the First Nations community) would encourage more equitable and inclusive community development processes and outcomes.

ii. Create opportunities for staff, volunteers, and members of the community to participate in anti-oppression training and learning opportunities.

iii. Extend support for group specific organizing in order to address the particular needs and experiences of various groups within the wider community.

## 5. MAKE FUNDING FLEXIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE

*Flexible and sustainable funding is essential for building social infrastructure.*

i. Community development cannot take a cookie-cutter approach. Funding agencies must respond to the distinct needs, desires, designs, and pace of communities.

ii. Funding agencies should allow applicants to develop their own goals and frameworks of evaluation. Funding that does not rely on accountancy models or strict organizational criteria is much more effective at supporting grassroots and resident-led initiatives.

iii. Create core funding opportunities for community organizations. This is ultimately the **most important element** to enable organizations to plan and deliver effective, stable, and sustainable programs.

## 6. ALIGN THE SOLUTION WITH THE PROBLEM

*Although the PN strategy was developed in response to the growth of concentrated poverty and that all three levels of government support the PN framework financially, there has been no sustained tripartite action on poverty reduction.*

i.  Institute poverty reduction as a key aim for the PN framework and develop tangible poverty reduction goals and benchmarks.
ii.  Develop and implement creative strategies for economic development that build on the skills and assets of residents and the local community. Community Economic Development approaches that prioritize local decision making, benefit, ownership, skills development, and investment offer helpful direction and are emerging in KGO with initiatives like the business resource centre.
iii.  Coordinate anti-poverty initiatives through the Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) across PN sites. This does not mean imposing an agenda on residents or communities, but rather foregrounding systemic issues across neighbourhood borders even as community specific projects are developed.
iv.  Convene an action committee with representation from all three levels of government, the non-profit sector, community and residents' organizations and funding agencies to create meaningful action on concentrated poverty. Poor neighbourhoods in Toronto's inner suburbs are a feature of metropolitan-wide patterns of social polarization, spatial segregation, and the racialization of poverty. These patterns stem from political and economic shifts at multiple scales including the deindustrialization of the economy, the rise of precarious work and the dismantling of social protections, the growing problem of housing affordability, limited access to transportation, and racism in local labour and housing markets. Thus, in order to address the causes of concentrated neighbourhood poverty, to align the solution with the problem, action must take place well beyond the neighbourhood scale.

# AUTHORS

**Deborah Cowen** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Programme in Planning at the University of Toronto. She has been active in community projects in Kingston Galloway/Orton Park for the past five years. Her scholarly research follows two main trajectories. The first examines urban politics and planning, with a focus on the suburbanization and racialization of poverty. The second examines how territory is fashioned and how the political is remade through conflict. She has published her work in journals such as the *International Journal for Urban and Regional Research*, *Social and Cultural Geography*, *Citizenship Studies*, the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *Environment and Planning D, Just Labour, Theory and Event*, and *Antipode*.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Objectives

In recent years social investment in Toronto has been dramatically recast through the implementation of the "Priority Neighbourhood" (PN) framework. This framework has multiple architects, but most prominent have been the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto. The PN framework has a variety of aims as well as stakeholders, but one key common goal is to respond to the changing nature and geography of poverty in Toronto. Defined by its geographically *targeted* policy, the PN framework aims to direct investment to "high needs" and underserviced areas of the City. The framework is also characterized by an emphasis on resident engagement and community-based planning. Together these changes in the geography and form of social policy and investment have had a profound impact on service provision and community development, both inside and outside targeted areas.

This pilot study explores the impact of Priority Neighbourhood designation on the development of social infrastructure in one community in Southeast Scarborough: Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park. The report also draws on experiences of the Parkdale community in west downtown Toronto, a "high-needs" area without priority neighbourhood status, in order to contrast the experience of neighbourhoods that are targeted and those that are not. This research finds that there are policies and practices associated with PN designation that drain local capacity and this report seeks to highlight these policies and practices for improvement. On the other hand, this research also uncovers a range of creative approaches to targeted investment, local capacity building, and community governance that have a positive impact in cultivating social infrastructure that should be celebrated, supported, and shared.

**The study has the following objectives:**

i.  To document the changing social geography of Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park over the last three decades (i.e. rising levels of poverty, rapid growth of the immigrant population) and the response from the local social services sector.
ii.  To document the innovative forms of community development that have emerged over the past decade in this part of Scarborough to respond to the changing social geography and widespread gaps in service provision.
iii.  To trace the rise of new public and non-profit policy frameworks for governance and investment in Toronto's Priority Neighbourhoods in response to these same changes in population and service needs.
iv.  To explore how these new approaches to governance impact community partnerships and institutional configurations.

v. To investigate challenges and opportunities for community participation, engagement and mobilization that these funding and participatory planning opportunities provoke (i.e. capacity building vs. "capacity draining").

vi. To recommend approaches for making participatory planning more conducive to resident empowerment and community capacity building within the study area specifically, and more broadly in Toronto's underserved areas.

## 1.2  Rationale for the study

For several decades, since at least the 1970s, three important and interconnected trends have been reshaping the social landscape of Toronto. First, *income polarization* has been under way for many years and is associated with profound transformations in the local and global economy. The scaling back of the social welfare state and its impacts on income security continue to intensify this polarization, resulting in a city with growing numbers of poor people and neighbourhoods, growing numbers of affluent people and neighbourhoods, and a rapidly widening gulf in between.

A second process has been the *increasing concentration and segregation of poverty* in particular areas of the city. This has taken shape through a gradual but nonetheless dramatic "suburbanization" of poverty, while neighbourhoods in the core experience persistent gentrification.

During the same time period we have also witnessed a third definitive shift – *the racialization of poverty*. While this is not an entirely new phenomenon, the intensification of social and spatial polarization in recent decades coincides with dramatic changes to federal immigration policy that have had powerful implications for settlement in the city. Changes to immigration policy have seen more immigrants coming from global south countries and more polarization in the class of immigrants coming to Canada and Toronto. Persistent problems with the credentialing of foreign-trained workers along with assiduous racism in local labour and housing markets have meant that social polarization in Toronto is now starkly racialized.

Together, these trends have produced an increasingly divided city; a city divided geographically, economically, and along the lines of race, ethnicity and immigration status. Toronto's inner suburbs are now home to more concentrated groups of the largely racialized poor, while at the same time, the downtown core has become wealthier and whiter.

Beyond the problem of growing inequality, these shifts have generated a specific set of challenges for Toronto's low-income communities and for service providers, activists, and community development workers. These are all tied to the changing geography of poverty. On the one hand, there are challenges associated with built form in the suburbs – problems of accessibility and mobility that are built right into the postwar landscape. On the other hand, there is a gap in infrastructure and service provision in these areas that stems from a

long legacy of social investment in the downtown core. No doubt, there has been an awareness of these shifts in the frontline service sector and among researchers for several decades. Three decades ago, the Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto (1979, 1980) produced a two-part report documenting the emergence of these exact trends titled "Metro Suburbs in Transition." However, it is much more recent that this awareness has translated into serious public debate and policy response.

Without a doubt, the United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT) brought attention to these issues with its 2004 report "Poverty by Postal Code." Around the same time, the City of Toronto began developing new community and neighbourhood strategies. Under the auspices of the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force (SNTF), the City and the UWGT worked together to develop an aligned response. This was the genesis of Toronto's Priority Neighbourhood framework, which identified 13 neighbourhoods for targeted investment, resident engagement, and new local governance strategies. Despite the significant impact of this policy framework on the ground, it has yet to garner much analysis or evaluation.

Concentrated poverty in the inner suburbs is one part of a process that is also generating more concentrated wealth, particularly in the inner city (Hulchanski 2007). Nevertheless, policy responses thus far target only one "side" of these broader shifts. Indeed, the "other side" of social polarization – specifically, the accumulation of wealth in the inner city – is rarely treated as a problem at all. Gentrification is often even prescribed as a solution to urban problems. The PN framework governs areas of the city that have experienced under-investment, disinvestment and long-term decline in the inner suburbs, yet it is the most significant and coordinated response we have seen emerge to the overall changes of polarization and segregation taking place in the city. This means that an evaluation of a framework that is ostensibly about one particular part of the city should be of urgent interest to anybody concerned about the wide-ranging problems and challenges facing the city as a whole. This report aims to bring this very problem into light to address the challenges that underpin a policy response that, in a sense, responds to "half" the problem. At the same time, the report takes the local work of the PN framework seriously to assess the challenges and opportunities it provokes on the ground within targeted neighbourhoods.

## 1.3   Methods & Limitations

This report draws on qualitative research in the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park and Parkdale communities in Toronto. The research in Parkdale was limited to a small number of key informant interviews. The research was more extensive in KGO – the main focus of this study. The authors conducted semi-structured *key informant interviews* with a wide range of community groups, residents, service providers, and funders (7 in Parkdale and 19 in KGO, for a full list of participants see Appendix 1). Participants were invited to be involved in the research based on their experiences as residents, in community organizing and development, in service provision, or in policy development. Participants were also recruited in order to learn from a wide diversity of peoples and experiences. In practice

this meant including participants from diverse ethno-racial, religious, and linguistic groups, explicitly soliciting the voices of newcomers and First Nations residents (both are significant communities in KGO), and deliberately working with youth, seniors, and women's organizations. Community partners for this pilot study at the East Scarborough Storefront (KGO) and St. Christopher House (Parkdale) provided advice on which individuals and organizations to consult. Building on relationships developed through four years of community planning work in KGO, the authors also drew on their own knowledge and social networks. Finally, based on the suggestions of people we interviewed, additional participants were invited into the research process. Interviews were all recorded on a digital recorder and notes taken during the interview.

*Focus groups* were also critically important to this research. Focus groups provided the authors with an opportunity to ask residents directly about their experiences and everyday lives in the community, and their specific observations of resident engagement and local planning and governance processes.

The first focus group was open to all residents of the KGO community and recruitment was done through established groups like the Residents Rising Community Association, and facilities such as the Action for Neighbourhood Change site and the East Scarborough Storefront. A concerted effort was made to recruit focus group participants from a wide range of diverse groups in the community. We deliberately contacted key informants from diverse community groups that had already participated in the study and asked that they recruit clients or members from their organizations.

The second focus group was organized specifically for South Asian residents of KGO. This special focus was important because of the size of the local South Asian community, which makes up close to 20% of the local resident population and 40% of recent immigrants (City of Toronto 2006, 4). Dedicating a focus group to South Asian residents allowed us to conduct the consultation in five different languages that made wider participation possible. Community-based researcher Nessa Babli provided translation for all of our research and recruitment materials, conducted the recruitment, and along with Siva Sivanathan provided multilingual facilitation on site. The first and second focus groups were both conducted at the Action for Neighbourhood Change site. Between both of these groups we heard from 60 resident participants, split into smaller groups for facilitation. Childcare, a meal, honoraria, and transit tokens were provided.

We conducted a third small focus group with five members of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation's local tenant council. KGO has the largest concentration of public housing in the province of Ontario, so this was an important constituency to consult based purely on population size. The consultation was also crucial because TCHC has made efforts to move towards more tenant-led governance structures. Together these factors made the experiences and analyses of this group particularly valuable for this research. The focus group was held in a common room in one of the TCHC buildings in the community. Childcare was not required but a meal, honoraria, and transit tokens were provided.

In addition to key informant interviews and focus groups, we undertook a thorough review of academic and public policy literature on related topics, including social capital, asset-based community development, social infrastructure, targeting, "neighbourhood effects," and suburban decline. We also conducted participant observation at a range of community meetings in KGO and Parkdale.

The research also faced a number of important limitations that no doubt shape the findings reported in the pages that follow. First, the scale of the research and the fact that it was a pilot study and not a full-scale endeavour placed clear limits on how many people and groups we were able to consult. There were many more organizations and individuals that we had identified as key actors in each community, but whom we were not able to consult because of time limits.

Second, the pilot study scale and structure of the research also made comparison across different priority neighbourhoods impossible, limiting the observations we can offer to the PN framework as a whole. Third, this study situates the problems associated with suburban decline in relation to downtown gentrification. We do not address changing social geographies of the outer suburbs, even though change is occurring at the metropolitan scale.

Lastly, our own position as researchers with several years of involvement in community initiatives in KGO is both an asset and a limitation. On the one hand, it provides us with access to and familiarity with many groups and networks in the community. At the same time, being associated with particular groups and networks in a community may also exclude us from groups and networks whose voices we also want to hear.

## 1.4   Findings

**SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTHEAST SCARBOROUGH**

*1. Priority neighbourhood designation can support communities in building social infrastructure but does not necessarily lead the process.*
The widely-heralded community building success in KGO stems from efforts that predate Priority Neighbourhood designation. PN designation supports the cultivation of social infrastructure but did not initiate it. Active and organized residents, a collaborative approach to community planning and service provision, a common space for meeting, and supportive and flexible funding have been the key ingredients in the ongoing success in Southeast Scarborough.

**INVESTING IN NEIGHBOURHOODS**

*2. Investment in underserviced inner suburban neighbourhoods is a critical corrective to decades of underinvestment and population change.*
Targeted investment enhances the social and physical infrastructure of neighbourhoods that need it most.

*3. Strengthening social infrastructure connects residents to a range of skills, knowledge, and networks that are typically beyond reach in communities that experience persistent underinvestment and marginalization.*
Effective initiatives in KGO like the Neighbourhood Trust, the Entrepreneurs Resource Centre, and the Community Design Initiative offer positive examples of capacity building.

*4. Targeted investment is a crucial corrective to underinvestment, but it is not in itself an effective strategy for poverty reduction.*
The purported success of place-based strategies in poverty reduction is unfounded. Research cited locally to support the effectiveness of these initiatives in other countries documents the *relocation* not the reduction of poverty.

Concentrated and racialized poverty manifests itself at the neighbourhood scale, but does not originate there. Any effective response must work at multiple spatial scales and on problems such as income security, health care, and employment.

*5. There are important practical limits to a targeted approach to investment.*
Targeted investment oversimplifies the spatial complexity of social networks and everyday life, creating arbitrary and unjust boundaries for residents and non-profit agencies in accessing resources.

Targeted investment creates particular challenges for social service agencies outside of priority neighbourhoods in accessing resources, even as these agencies may often serve residents from within priority neighbourhoods.

*6. Some forms of targeted investment pivot on erroneous assumptions about poor people and poor communities, which have detrimental impacts on the ground.*
These assumptions misdiagnose poverty as a highly local problem of "neighbourhood effects" rather than as a complex problem that manifests itself at the neighbourhood scale. The solutions they prescribe are also highly localized, sidelining well-documented causes of segregation, polarization, and racialization in the economy and in government policy.

**PLANNING NEIGHBOURHOODS DIFFERENTLY**

*7. The Priority Neighbourhood emphasis on community planning and resident engagement can foster innovative collaborations and creative initiatives, and can transform power relations in communities.*
Initiatives like the Neighbourhood Action Partnership support information sharing and collaborative planning across different organizations and sectors.

*8. Collaborative forms of planning can be constrained if persistent inequalities between community partners are unacknowledged or unaddressed.*
Uneven access to resources alongside longstanding exclusions and racism can inhibit inclusive and collaborative community planning.

*9. Diverse and effective representation of the local community in participatory planning processes is key.*
Community members who are active in community and organizational governance are often diverse in terms of ethno-racial and gender identity, but they are often predominantly people with professional skills and higher income.

*10. Despite an emphasis on "capacity building" and "resident engagement," organizations do not always incorporate residents into governance processes or decision-making in meaningful ways.*
This failure can undermine both the value of the engagement in terms of skills development, and can also drain capacity from residents who feel the gap between their efforts and impact.

*11. Popular theories of "social capital" that inform the Priority Neighbourhood framework underplay the political nature of marginality.*
These theories suggest that poor people are lacking either the engagement or appropriate skills to make positive change. They neglect persistent barriers to advancement (such as racism), they often conceal residents' significant investment of time, labour, and may encourage a form of exploitative volunteerism.

*12. Funding community development in a supportive and sustainable manner is critical for cultivating new skills and networks.*
The reliance on project funding that is now endemic to the non-profit sector is directly debilitating to the cultivation of social capital. Funders who are flexible in their evaluations and who do not rely on quantitative or accountancy models of success enhance the capacity of small, grassroots groups to deliver effective community programs and supports, and encourage them to learn from their experiences.

# 2. COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

## 2.1 What is social infrastructure?

"Infrastructure" is a term typically associated with the physical structures and systems that allow human settlements to function and to prosper. Roads, pipes, sewers, electrical grids, and telecommunications systems are usually the focus of talk about infrastructure. In recent years, however, there has been a growing interest in the social or community infrastructure that is also crucial in supporting human settlements to thrive. Social infrastructure is in many ways less tangible than its physical counterpart, constituted by the networks, relationships, organizations, services and facilities that allow communities to build capacity.

As Casey (2005, 8) argues, social infrastructure "is not simply about providing physical assets but about enhancing skills and knowledge and access to a range of appropriate services and responses." Social infrastructure cannot be reduced to the physical realm, but the built environment is nevertheless a critically important constitutive element. Spaces to meet, facilities for care, work or play, accessibility and connectivity are all crucial aspects of social infrastructure. In fact, the level of integration between physical and social resources is sometimes seen as a measure of the overall strength of a community's infrastructure (Clutterbuck and Novick 2003).

Social or community infrastructure can be grouped into a range of distinct clusters that correspond with different social service sectors, policy areas, and activities such as health, human development, "cross-community support," rights and advocacy, economy, and physical environment (Rothman 2005, 3). Social infrastructure certainly may involve all these activities and foci, however, rather than isolate various elements of infrastructure some scholars suggest that it is best defined by the depth, breadth, and diversity of interaction and interconnection across its parts (Flora and Flora 1993). In other words, social infrastructure is strong precisely when linkages within and beyond the community allow for flows of information, opportunities and resources; people and organizations mobilize and invest resources into the community; and when the diversity of the community is embraced and mobilized as a strength and resource (Sharp et al 2002, 406).

While the term is occasionally connected to the idea of a community's "safety net," social infrastructure is far more active than the passive image of a "net" catching those who fall suggests. Indeed, a strong social infrastructure is an underlying condition for community development. Social infrastructure supports peoples' collective capacity to act and make change; it is the collection of resources and capacities that allow communities to *develop further collective resources and capacities*.

The frequent reference to "community" might suggest that social infrastructure is inherently local, yet it is worth highlighting that the obstacles and opportunities for social infrastructure exist within a community and in a community's relation-

ship to actors and processes outside the local area (Harvey 1992, 125; Sharp et al 2002, 406). Public policy and investment, labour market conditions, transnational flows of people or ideas, and many other factors have direct impact on community capacity, but are not locally contained.

Social infrastructure is both a diagnostic and analytic tool. People concerned with enhancing it ask: what are the factors that limit its strength, and what could be done to support its cultivation? The concept has become important to those working in places where infrastructure is seen as lacking and where there are social, economic, and physical barriers to its cultivation. The inner suburbs of Toronto are one such area, and indeed, building social infrastructure is one of the underlying goals of the PN framework.

On the one hand, large-scale population change over the last four decades combined with growing poverty levels may create challenges for the kind of collaboration and network building that social infrastructure demands. On the other hand, residents of these areas face a prohibitive built environment with physical infrastructure that usually constrains rather than supports social connectivity. On the ground, this often means that in Toronto's inner suburbs, it is difficult to get around without a private automobile, there are few public or community facilities, and when they exist, they are often a long distance away and difficult to access. It also means that residents are often overworked and under-resourced and that there are social and linguistic barriers to gathering and sharing.

Investigating social infrastructure in this context demands an analysis of the factors and forces that fuel these conditions. Key questions include: what is "suburban decline" and what challenges does it pose for social infrastructure? What can be learned from KGO, a community that has experienced multiple challenges associated with decades of population change and disinvestment, but which has also developed a resilient social infrastructure over the last ten years? What role, if any, does PN designation play in neighbourhood transformation? And finally (how) do debates about and investment in social infrastructure address the question of poverty? Diagnosing the causes of segregation, polarization, and racialization is crucial to any efforts to develop a response, as the diagnosis of a problem and prescription for change are intimately entangled.

## 2.2 "Suburban Decline" in Toronto

Citywide processes of polarization, segregation, and racialization are typically discussed through a focus on one of their most visible effects: "suburban decline." Suburban decline typically refers to the shrinking income and social status of the inner suburban population and can be sensational precisely because the "Leave it to Beaver" image of this area has dominated the popular imaginary for so long (Davis 1997). Images of guns and gang violence and the use of racist monikers like "Scarlem" and "Scompton" circulate widely in popular discourse today, but things were very different during the development of these areas in the postwar period.

In the years following the Second World War, the urban fringes of Toronto underwent rapid development and population growth. The postwar housing boom, supported heavily by federal mortgage financing, saw thousands of young couples and families move to subdivisions in North

| Municipality | Population | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1941 | 1955 |
| Scarborough | 24,303 | 109,930 |
| Etobicoke | 18,973 | 93,627 |
| North York | 22,903 | 147,905 |

**Figure 2:** Municipal Populations in 1941 and 1955
(Source: Welfare Council of Toronto and District, 1956)

York, Scarborough, Etobicoke, York, and East York. The populations of these areas jumped by more than 400 per cent from the early 1940s through the mid-1950s transforming Toronto's fringes from rural to suburban landscapes (see Figure 2).

Working-class suburban settlement took place largely as a result of the *Veterans' Housing Act*, particularly in Scarborough and East York (Bonis 1968, Cowen 2005). Nevertheless, the areas that we now refer to as "inner suburbs" became home largely to the white middle classes. As Figure 2 suggests, after two and a half decades of postwar suburban growth, these areas were solidly middle class, with some high-income clusters particularly in North York and Etobicoke, but only a few small low-income residential pockets in Southwest Scarborough and South Etobicoke.

Mass development brought an influx of new residents, but these lands were already inhabited not only by rural settlers, but also by indigenous peoples. The traditional grounds of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations span the areas in question and active land claims on much of this land still challenge the validity of the Toronto Purchase (1787) and the subsequent 1923 Williams Treaties (Myrvold 1997, 27). The Mississauga of the New Credit was never a signatory of the Williams Treaties and so may still hold title to lands. In addition to the territorial displacement of First Nations peoples that suburbanization intensified, Toronto's inner suburbs are still shaped by histories of cultural violence. For instance, in 1925, the federal government banned the Pow Wow, sweat lodges, and Sun Dances through the *Indian Act*. This history no doubt holds significance for today's First Nations community in KGO; the annual Pow Wow and the sweat lodge at the Native Child and Family Services' Galloway Rd. facility are now highly valued cultural resources in the community.

We return to discuss questions of First Nations community and culture in chapter 4 and for now we focus on the "decline" in Toronto's inner suburbs, illustrated through the maps on the following pages. The map shown in Figure 3 shows a city in 1970 with a relatively even income distribution; the vast majority of census tracts are in the range of "middle income" (in beige) and there are few on either of the extreme ends of wealth or poverty. Also important to note is that the majority of low-income areas are concentrated in and around the downtown core. It was precisely over the next decade that these patterns started to change. Over the course of the 1970s, the three processes that were flagged earlier (income polarization, the

## Average Individual Income, City of Toronto, 1970
Average individual income from all sources, 15 Years and Over, Census Tracts
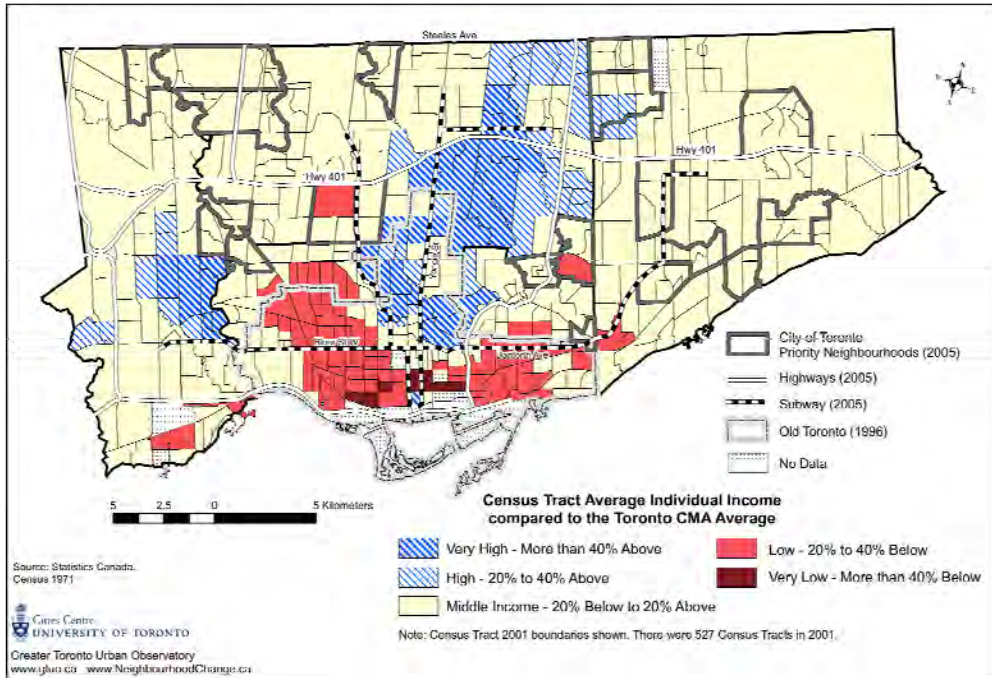


**Figure 3:** Average Individual Income, 1970 (Source: Cities Centre, 2010)


## Average Individual Income, City of Toronto, 1980
Average individual income from all sources, 15 Years and Over, Census Tracts
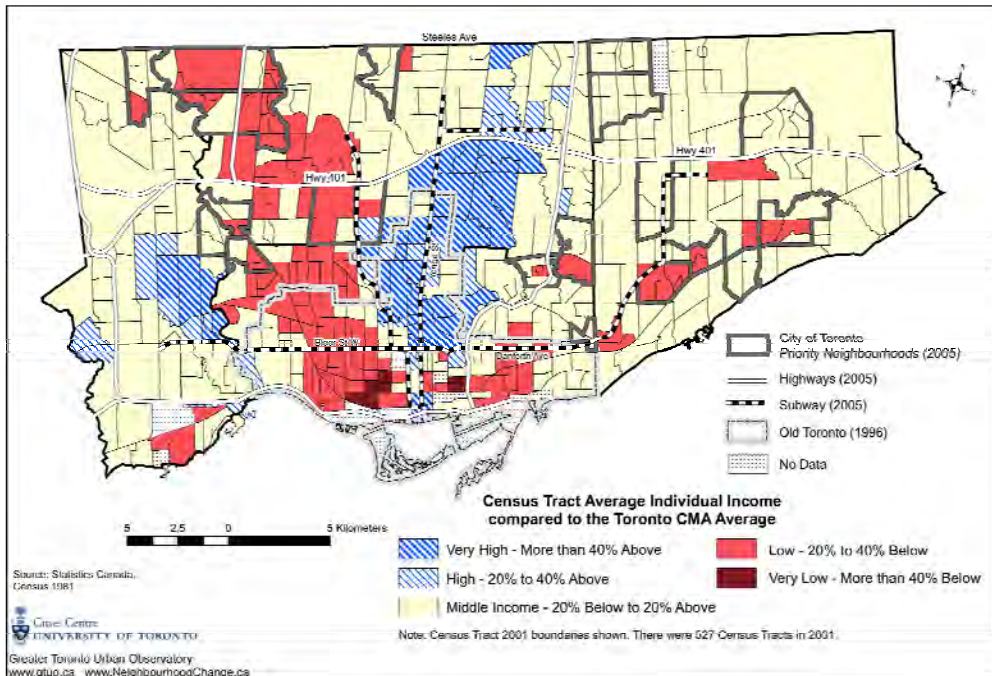


**Figure 4:** Average Individual Income, 1980 (Source: Cities Centre, 2010)

**Average Individual Income, City of Toronto, 2000**
Average Individual Income from all sources, 15 Years and Over, Census Tracts
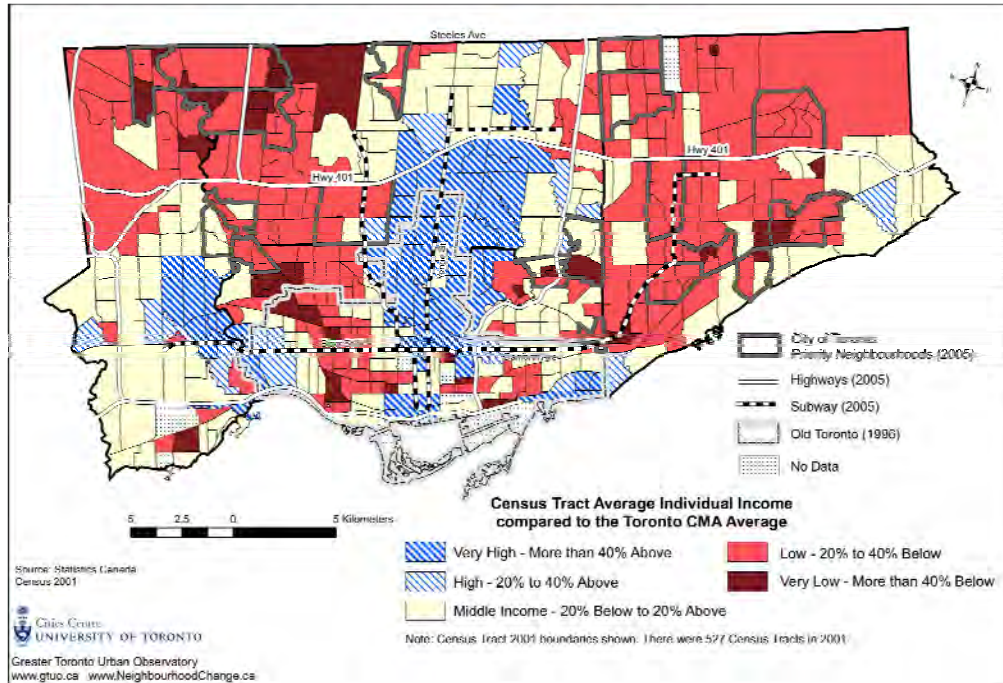


**Figure 5:** Average Individual Income, 2000 (Source: Cities Centre, 2010)

**Neighbourhood Concentrations of White or Visible Minority Populations, by Census Tracts, Toronto CMA, 2006**
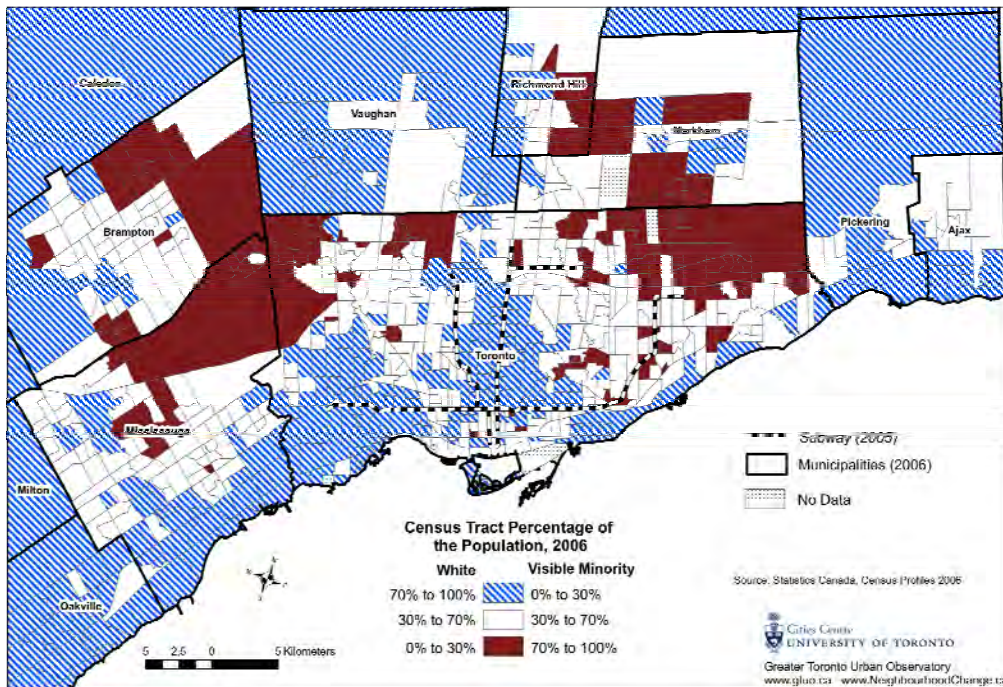


**Figure 6:** Neighbourhood Concentrations of White or Visible Minority Populations
(Source: Cities Centre, 2010)

**Figure 7:** Recent Immigrant Populations 1971-2006 (Source: Cities Centre, 2010)

suburbanization of poverty, and the racialization of poverty) began reshaping the social geography of Toronto. Income polarization became much more stark with a declining number of "middle income" areas, poverty migrated from the downtown core to the inner suburbs, and more and more people of colour moved to these same suburbs as the downtown became whiter. By 1980, tremendous change had already occurred with regards to income.

The map in Figure 4 shows the extent of change over the course of just one decade. Most notably, income has become more polarized, with fewer census tracts in the "middle income" range and more reporting elevated levels of wealth (blue) and poverty (red). We can also see the

beginnings of the migration of poverty into the city's inner suburbs, and the emergence of Toronto's infamous "U" shape of poverty stretching from the downtown to the northwest and northeast.

These patterns of change would continue to intensify, such that by the beginning of the twenty-first century when they started to register in public discourse, they were already deeply entrenched in the city's social landscape. Jumping forward 20 years from 1980 to 2000 (Figure 5), patterns of income polarization and the suburbanization of poverty have become stark. Elite areas that were already established in the west end surrounding High Park and in the central core stretching northward along Yonge Street have grown, and more

of them now fall in the "very high" income category. New areas of concentrated wealth are also evident in the 2000 map, particularly in the downtown core, The Beach and surrounding areas in the east end along the waterfront. Even more striking is the spread of tracts with low and very low incomes across whole new areas of the map. The most dramatic is the change in Scarborough, which remained largely "middle income" on the 1980 map. By 2000, almost the entire municipality has an average individual income level below the city average. Also notable is the growth of low-income areas in North Etobicoke and North York.

As the downtown has become home to higher income populations, it has also become whiter, and likewise as the inner suburbs have become home to lower income populations they have also become home to more people of colour. This pattern is clearly evident in Figure 6, which maps "white" and "visible minority" populations, this time at the larger scale of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). For all the problems and limitations of the category "visible minority" (Bannerji 2000) the map nevertheless reveals important trends.

It is quickly apparent from the map that there are indeed patterns to where white and racialized people reside. The downtown and central core, the west end of Toronto, and large swaths of the outer suburbs have very high concentrations of white households. Alternately, North Scarborough and North Etobicoke are immediately visible on the map for having high concentrations of visible minorities. Income polarization and the concentrations of poverty and wealth in the inner suburbs and downtown core respectively correspond directly with patterns of racialization.

This data clearly suggest that Toronto has experienced polarization, segregation, and racialization over the past 40 years. But what factors explain these trends? First, it is worth noting that these same trajectories are evident in larger cities across Canada and around the advanced capitalist world (Sassen 2001). Indeed, the recent release of the Brookings Institute's (2010) report "The State of Metropolitan America" confirms all these trends in the U.S. context. The report describes a shrinking middle class with simultaneous growth in both upper- and lower-income households and finds that "minority householders are overrepresented in low income households" (134). It also asserts, "suburbs are home to the fastest growing and largest poor population in the country" (132).

Many of the changes fuelling these patterns are national and global in scale, even as they are local in impact. Transformations in the global economy during the exact timeframe that the patterns were manifest in Toronto are now well documented, as are the impacts for cities like Toronto. Specifically, the widespread movement of industrial production from city regions in the advanced capitalist world to lower-wage regions and countries has had a profound impact on employment and income distribution in cities. The kind of polarization that we see in Toronto is characteristic of the loss of stable industrial employment and the rise of a bipolar service-oriented economy with a growing cluster of high-wage professionals, and a growing cluster of low-wage, precarious employment.

Political restructuring has been both a response to and cause of economic change. The restructuring of the Canadian welfare state, starting with the 1985 federal budget introduced selectivity into social policy and is broadly accepted as the moment

when "neoliberal" approaches and "targeting" practices were adopted in federal social policy (Brodie 1996). Another key event for Ontario's cities was the 1995 election of the conservative provincial government. Mike Harris's "Common Sense Revolution" entailed the introduction of workfare, the privatization of public assets and services, the downsizing of the civil service, and municipal amalgamations. At this time the province phased out capital subsidies to public transit, and downloaded the operating costs of social assistance and social housing leaving the City with added net costs as high as $350 million annually (Community Social Planning Council of Toronto 2000). The pressures associated with downloading further strained social services and people with low incomes.

Local planning decisions are also directly implicated in these shifts. The construction of large apartment towers throughout the inner suburbs since the 1960s did much to draw people with lower incomes out of the downtown, just as the population with lower incomes was becoming larger and more precarious. Through a complicated history of metropolitan political wrangling, the form of suburban development was transformed. Low-density subdivisions were increasingly interspersed with high-density tower communities. As Siciliano (2010, 84) notes, "already by the mid-1950s over fifty percent of new housing starts in the suburbs took the form of private multi-residential apartments" (see also Hess 2005).

The provision of high-density housing at a lower cost in the inner suburbs coincided with rising housing prices in the downtown core and is directly tied to the gentrification of the inner city. Inner-city gentrification is in part a feature of the growth of high-wage professional classes, and indic-

ative of deep connections between economic and spatial change (Walks 2008).

Immigration plays a crucial role in all of these transformations. It reveals profound relationships between local and global forces reshaping the city's social geography, and also exposes the entanglement of processes of polarization, segregation and racialization. Changes to immigration policy do not in themselves explain the stark patterning of race and space in Toronto. There is no necessary connection between settlement and immigration patterns, or between nationality and experiences of racialization (cf Sharma 2006). Nor can immigration status be conflated with ethno-racial identity; people of colour have been part of the Canadian political community since such a thing existed.

Nevertheless, profound changes in immigration since the 1960s are an important part of the shifts in visible minority status in the city. Specifically, dramatic changes engineered in the 1960s redefined "who gets in." The points system, introduced in 1967, designed to remove discrimination based on nationality, instead assesses applicants on skills criteria such as language ability and education level. These criteria are not impartial, but they favour instrumental needs of the economy rather than criteria regarding race and national origin. As a result of these legislative changes, the major source countries of immigrants shifted rapidly from Europe to Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. By 1971 the majority of immigrants to Canada and Toronto were people of colour coming from the global south (StatsCan, CURA).

If regulatory change transformed who came to Canada, racism in labour markets and the unwillingness of professional organizations and government to recognize
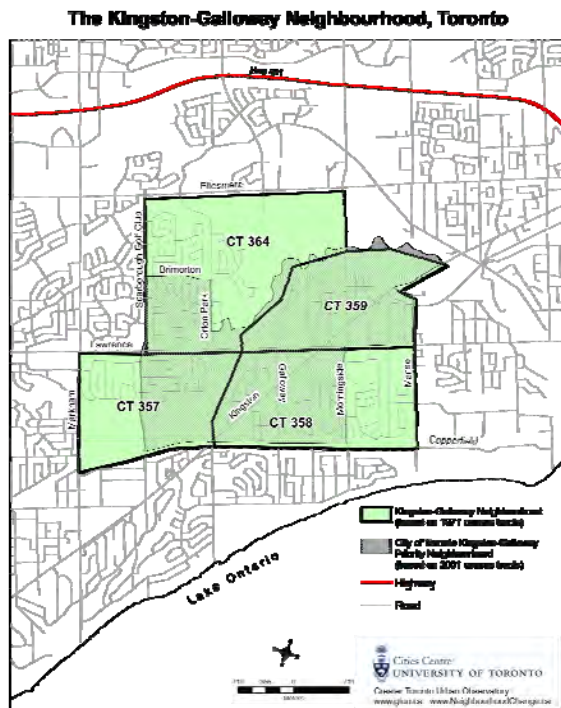
**Figure 8:** Map of Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park
(Source: Cities Centre, 2010)

foreign credentials ensured that most new immigrants would be concentrated in the growing clusters of low-wage service work. Complex forces in local housing markets, including downtown gentrification and inaffordability, racial "steering," and enclave formation help sculpt the racialized geographies we witness today.

### 2.3 "Suburban Decline" and Social Infrastructure in Kingston-Galloway/ Orton Park

Many of these trends are evident if we shift our lens to the community scale over the course of the same decades. Using boundaries that are slightly broader than those of the official priority neighbourhood to allow for comparison of data over time (see Figure 8), we can identify several trends. Beyond a significant growth in the local population, from 31,715 in 1971,

to 38,723 in 1991 and finally, to 40,846 in 2006, the effects of polarization, segregation, and racialization are all evident. Between 1971 and 2005, individual income declined by 29% as a percentage of the Toronto CMA average. The figures for household income are even more dramatic; in the same time period they dropped 35% as a percentage of the Toronto CMA average. In 1971, 26% of the population in the KGO area consisted of immigrants, compared to 40% in 1991 and 48% in 2006. The population of recent immigrants also rose slightly during this period from 7% of the population in 1971 to 11% in 2006.

Perhaps most striking are the changes in the local population's first language. In 1971, more than 87% of the population reported English as a mother tongue. By 1991 this figure has dropped to 72%, and by 2006, 55% of the population reported English as a mother tongue. This rise in population with a first language other than English was also matched by a change in mother tongues reported. The second-largest mother tongue reported in 1971 was German (3.8%), followed by French (1.5%) and Italian (1.4%). By 2006 the second largest mother tongue after English was Tamil (5.9%), followed by Gujurati (4.7%), Urdu (3.7%), and Tagalog (3.4%). These changes in mother tongue suggest broader patterns of change in immigration discussed above, and are a significant factor in constituting the large visible minority population in KGO, reported at 61.4% in 2006 (source: City of Toronto).

The decline in household and individual income, and changes in population have taken place in KGO as a result of a range of processes that operate at much larger scales than the neighbourhood or even the city. However, local decisions are also at play, particularly with regards to social

|                        | 1971    | 1991    | 2006    | 1971-2006 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| **Average individual income** | $5,550  | $22,880 | $27,138 | $21,588   |
| Constant 2005 dollars  | $29,206 | $31,382 | $27,138 | -$2,068   |
| as a % of Toronto CMA  | 96%     | 79%     | 67%     | -29%      |
| **Average household income** | $11,695 | $44,664 | $56,621 | $44,926   |
| Constant 2005 dollars  | $61,543 | $61,262 | $56,621 | -$4,922   |
| as a % of Toronto CMA  | 99%     | 75%     | 64%     | -35%      |

**Figure 9:** Average individual and household income, Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (Source: Cities Centre, 2010)

housing. For instance, this area holds the highest concentration of social housing in the province, which is the result of planning decisions made in local and metropolitan government since the post-WWII period. These decisions have affected the longer-term trajectory of the area, but other housing policies have generated more acute change. In 1986, the city began contracting a set of motels along Kingston Rd. to provide emergency shelter for families; 800 to 1,300 refugee or homeless families inhabited the motels on any given night throughout the 1990s. By 1999 the City of Toronto had begun phasing out the use of motels, and the number of contracted motels was reduced from 13 at the peak to 4 in current operation as shelters (City of Toronto 1999). Today, policies like "Streets to Homes" relocate homeless people largely from the downtown core to apartments in this part of Scarborough (Clarke 2008). We might also point towards significant public investment in the revitalization of the inner city which supports gentrification and intensifies downtown housing affordability problems that indirectly push lower-income residents to reside in areas like KGO.

Despite this discussion of suburban "decline," and the particular challenges faced by this community, KGO is widely recognized for its vibrant civic culture. If we re-call the definition of social infrastructure provided by Sharp et al. (2002, 406), which emphasizes linkages within and beyond the community, the local investment of resources, and the valuing of diversity, then Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park measures up well. While there are challenges in all these areas that will be addressed later in the report, there is also a surprising strength. The area is known for its active and organized resident base, a wide range of social, recreational and educational activities organized by diverse groups and agencies, successful advocacy for policy change, commitment to environmental justice and food security, awards for youth environmental innovation, citations from policy institutes for creative approaches to service provision and community development, strong connections to academic institutions and professional communities in law, architecture, and urban planning. Perhaps most importantly a profoundly collaborative approach characterizes relationships between various sectors and organizations within the community, as well as in the relationships to organizations in other places.

This all raises the question of how KGO has gone from being one of the most underserved communities in the city, known primarily for gangs and poverty, to

**Figure 10:** 2005 March to Save the Storefront (Source: East Scarborough Storefront)

a celebrated model of positive change. What can be learned from the practice and theory of social infrastructure from a place like KGO?

*The East Scarborough Storefront*

Without a doubt, the East Scarborough Storefront (from here on "the Storefront") is a crucial force in the transformation of KGO; the community building work that has taken place in this area has occurred in direct relation to its founding and development.

The Storefront is a unique collaboration between service providers and community. Close to 40 partner agencies offer services and programs in a common facility governed by a mixture of community and service-sector representatives. The Storefront is much more than just a space for residents to access services, however. It has played a profound role in building community capacity and vision, organizing new initiatives, identifying unmet needs, and creating opportunities for connection across the diverse threads of the community.

The Storefront idea was proposed in 1999 in response to a growing awareness of

unmet need in this part of southeast Scarborough. Service gaps that stemmed from decades of gradual population change were increasingly hard to ignore, but it was the relocation of refugee families into the Kingston Road motels that became the linchpin. As Roche and Roberts (2007, 127) explain, "newly-arrived refugees and recently homeless individuals and families came to epitomize the state of disconnect between the level of need and the ability to provide services within the local community." These acute strains on the motel population and the local community prompted a group of City staff, community organizations, and residents to work together to fill these gaps.

The Storefront opened in 2001 and was located initially in the Morningside Mall. It quickly became an important asset to the community. Three years after it opened, up to 5,400 residents used the Storefront each month for everything from employment services, to health clinics, to youth arts, to meditation for Tamil seniors.

The Storefront became so valuable to the community that when it was threatened with closure after a loss of funding in 2005, hundreds of residents demonstrated

to save their "community space" (see Figure 10). This demonstration was not only crucial in securing the support of local politicians to save the Storefront, it was also a profoundly important event in the building of local infrastructure.

The success of local efforts to ensure the ongoing life of the Storefront was impressive. It required organization, persistence, and the confidence of residents and staff organizers. It was also a display of the growing strength of this community, and interrupted a legacy of suburban politics and politicians in Toronto that serves the interests primarily, if not exclusively, of established middle-class communities (Cowen 2005). This event was thus key in securing the new home of the Storefront on Lawrence Avenue, but also in shattering entrenched forms of inequality and invisibility.

The success of the Storefront model has been recognized in attempts to reproduce its "hub" structure in other parts of the city (interview and see discussion in section 4.1). The benefits of the Storefront hub model have been well documented elsewhere; Roche and Roberts (2007, 130) note the multiple ways in which the hub structure responded to the needs of both community and service providers. They emphasize the advantages of the "one-stop-shopping" experience in the context of the dispersed, underserviced suburban environment with its prohibitive mobility and accessibility.

The collaborative nature of the Storefront hub model, in which different service providers and community members work together to provide responsive resources, also informs a defining characteristic of the Storefront model – the shared nature of the facility and its governance. The Storefront was always envisioned as a joint initiative and collective project, which has allowed a sense of community ownership of the facility to flourish. Indeed these principles are highlighted in the Storefront's three principles for community organizing:

- Ensure that residents take the lead role in the development of their community
- Build the leadership capacity of residents
- Work collaboratively with all stakeholders to bring about social change and justice (ESS 2010)

While the Storefront has unquestionably been central to the community building that has taken place in KGO over the last decade, it is also part of a broader process of change. The Storefront is at once a source of community transformation, a product of capacities that were already emerging locally, and a key thread in the web of networks and resources that constitute the community's infrastructure.

A number of participants in the study spoke about the simultaneous centrality of the Storefront to the success of the community, and its collaborative role with other groups. The most widely circulated account of the role of the Storefront in the wider network of social infrastructure in KGO is without a doubt "Anne's circles" (Figure 11).

Anne Gloger, director of the East Scarborough Storefront, crafted a diagram of social infrastructure that is renowned in KGO and circulates widely. Anyone who has participated in events or meetings in this community has likely committed it to memory. The simple diagrammatic representation of three key circles of strength in KGO is an unusual example of a ground-up theorizing.

**Figure 11:** "Anne's Circles," a diagram of social infrastructure in East Scarborough (Source: East Scarborough Storefront)

Anne's Circles highlight the combined role of resident leadership and engagement; public investment and collaborative planning; and, shared space, services and vision. Resident leadership is represented in the lower circle through the work of Residents Rising and Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC). Public investment and the collaborative planning of public services is represented in the upper right circle through the Neighbourhood Action Partnership (NAP). Finally, the Storefront in the upper left circle provides space, services and the opportunity to define common vision for the community.

Increasingly, the Storefront is also concentrating its efforts on alternative strategies of economic development. It is pursuing these aims through the creation of a local business support initiative to help residents create and sustain their own employment, and through unusual and creative training and education projects. The "Community Design Initiative" is training young people who intern with architects and city planners as they design a real addition for the Storefront facility, while a

range of collaborations with post-secondary institutions help build linkages between the community and education and training opportunities.

The NAP and the ANC are the City and United Way's respective initiatives for the Priority Neighbourhoods and will be addressed in greater detail in chapters 3, 4 and 5. For now it is worth noting the important role that priority neighbourhood designation plays within this diagram, but also the limits of PN in explaining social infrastructure. PN designation can play an important role in supporting infrastructure building, but in a community that was already actively organizing, designation, and all that it brings, builds upon and entangles in established initiatives rather than founding something entirely new. Indeed, both the Storefront and Residents Rising predate designation.

One of the notable aspects of this diagram is the collaborative nature of relations represented. Gloger argues that the "magic" that happens in the community arises precisely at the intersections of these three important forces. This can also be understood in direct relation to the PN framework. As we explore in chapter 5, this collaborative approach to local governance supports the thick linkages within and across the community and promotes sharing rather than competition that is often the norm in communities without PN status.

### "Alignment" and "Convergence'

In addition to discussions about collaboration within the community, a number of key informants described "alignment" or "convergence" in factors both within and beyond the bounds of KGO that made transformation possible. One participant who works with a large social service agency emphasized how a range of forces

aligned within the community at the same time.

> *…everything was sort of aligning at the right time. Street crime was down, motivation was up, Storefront moved to a new location, good personalities… the magic at the intersections stuff. You can't really put a formula to that. A lot has to do with how receptive people are and how open they are to working with each other and collaborating.* (Interview 9)

Several participants outlined the opportunities that arose when various stakeholders came together with overlapping agendas that could be mobilized to the advantage of the community. The term "alignment" was not used to suggest that there was total agreement between different actors on either ends or means, but rather that there was enough agreement to proceed in some kind of collaboration towards community development.

One participant described how a progresssive "alignment" of the different levels of government was crucial in a post–"Commonsense Revolution" moment. The alignment of more progressive political trajectories at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels with David Miller, Dalton McGuinty, and Paul Martin in power, respectively, allowed new ideas for social investment to foster creative programs and policies on the ground that underpin the PN framework. A "bureaucratic alignment" followed and allowed for "discussions to happen quite differently." A trilateral table on social development was created out of these discussions, and "a lot of stuff got unlocked at that table." Political alignment was important, but so was alignment between the government and non-profit sector:

> *The SNTF [Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force, see chapter 3] had proposed some structures that we could put in place. They had a vision of government and non-governmental players throwing their resources on a common table. That's never going to happen, for a whole bunch of reasons, so what we ended up doing was looking for **alignment**. Because of the context at that moment, there was a willingness to talk **alignment**. It was **alignment**. Political agendas shift, but we had a moment when political agendas where shifting in the same direction at the same pace. But that moment doesn't last, so it was around just creating that **alignment**.* (Interview 3)

What is key to understand, but is not always immediately apparent, is that this alignment was first and foremost spatial:

> *Alignment was on the thirteen [priority neighbourhoods]. So, concretely, we had Service Canada saying "we want to make new investment, where should we do it? We had the province saying… "you know what, guys? I finally got new investment for the CHC [community health centre] system in Toronto and I think this is a compelling story and I'm going to approach that investment on this basis. Alignment. Capital investment through CHCs. And that just happened all over the place. Then the Youth Opportunities Strategy, or whatever they called it, got announced, which included the Youth Challenge Fund as well as jobs for youth, a youth outreach worker program at the provincial level. Alignment, focused on the thirteen priority neighbourhoods.* (Interview 3)

This spatial alignment is one of the strengths and weaknesses of the PN model

as the geographic structure is sometimes the only thing that brings radically different actors and ideas together. The advantages are that it allows for investment, and for investment to take a wide variety of political forms. At the same time, this diversity can also be a problem in that on the ground it can be experienced as chaotic and even contradictory, as we explore below.

One participant from the foundation sector emphasized the fortuity and contingency of the recent success in KGO, suggesting that it could be understood in terms of the *convergence* of a range of forces including visionary and skilful people and the special relationships that developed between them.

> *It speaks in part to the magic of timing, a convergence of a set of people and relationships in a community, and a capacity to follow their instincts, use their knowledge and networks to make something grow.* (Interview 8)

This participant proceeded to elaborate on the nature of the social relationships at work in the community, highlighting the diversity of players and the highly collaborative approach they bring to their work:

> *It's got a real diversity of players around the table. People genuinely like each other is my sense... Certainly West Hill and the Storefront seem to approach the work from really a collaborative framework as opposed to a competitive one. When I go and meet with one about their projects, sometimes the other will be sitting there. It's the nature of how the work is unfolding in their little diagram, their Venn diagram that they like to put up... Part of this story is about the people. It's been the process, but the process*

> *has been stewarded by a set of folks... There is real synergy from what I can see from the people involved, who held a collective vision and had their piece, so the whole was really greater than the sum of the parts in that community. You can set up a good governance chart in theory, but it's the practice of it that they do so skilfully.* (Interview 8)

In practice, a focus on social infrastructure in KGO provokes discussion about public policy at multiple levels of government, power relations and collaborations within the community and, finally, skills and capacity building, particularly through economic development. Thus, on the ground, social infrastructure is both local and non-local; it addresses actors and relationships in multiple sites and at different scales. Social infrastructure creates conditions for residents and local communities to better direct their own futures and advocate for themselves. It does not necessarily address poverty, or the processes of polarization, segregation, and racialization directly, but it can directly address the experience of marginalization that reproduces these trajectories and that accompanies the local experience of the process often described as "suburban decline."

Social infrastructure in KGO is vibrant and the PN framework plays an important role in its strength. However, the research also identified challenges and limitations associated with current approaches. Key informants and focus group participants mentioned a number of practices that inhibit infrastructure building and community development.

This report now shifts to a more detailed consideration of social infrastructure "on the ground" in order to draw out specific opportunities for sharing policies and

practices that work well, and for improving those that are limiting potential. We ask: What are the different obstacles to building infrastructure? How are they created through public and non-profit policy? What are the specific challenges and opportunities that accompany PN designation? What is working well in this community that might be helpful for other areas of the city to learn from? What can we learn from contrasting the experiences in KGO with those in Parkdale?

In order to explore the most pressing issues identified through the research, the discussion is organized according to key themes. In chapter 3 we explore the assumptions underpinning spatially targeted investment and its practice on the ground through an investigation of the PN framework. We then go on to interrogate changing theories of neighbourhood poverty and how these inform practical responses that promote investment in "social capital." In chapter 4, we consider recent shifts in neighbourhood planning with a specific eye to the increasingly pivotal role of "resident engagement."

# 3. TARGETED INVESTMENT, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

Two key shifts in social investment define Toronto's Priority Neighbourhood framework: the spatial targeting of policy (also known as "place-based" policy) and an emphasis on resident engagement and collaborative planning. In other words, the strategy pivots on the notion that we need to invest in *neighbourhoods* and plan them differently. This chapter explores some of the ideas and explanations that underpin these two claims and their impacts in KGO.

We find that there are very good reasons for both targeting investment and transforming planning, and yet, there are erroneous assumptions about poverty that inform this redesign of policies and programs. These underpinning assumptions are worth exploring in some detail as they connect directly to the problems that residents and other informants experience on the ground.

The chapter examines two dominant theories that in different ways download responsibility for poverty to poor people and poor neighbourhoods: "neighbourhood effects" and "social capital" arguments. The chapter demonstrates how unfounded assumptions about poor people and neighbourhoods lead to damaging policies and practices, and identifies alternatives. These alternatives keep the causes and context for neighbourhood poverty in focus. We look first at different rationales for targeted policy by engaging debates about "neighbourhood effects." We then shift to explore a related set of arguments in debates about "social capital."

## 3.1 Targeted Investment and Toronto's Priority Neighbourhoods

The Toronto priority neighbourhoods strategy was introduced in 2005. It identifies 13 neighbourhoods for targeted investment in capacity building and social infrastructure. The reorientation of social investment to a place-based approach followed from the publication of the United Way of Greater Toronto's (UWGT) 2004 report "Poverty by Postal Code," which indicated growing concentrations of poverty in the former suburban municipalities. The Toronto City Summit Alliance's (TCSA) 2003 report and 2004 conference added impetus for all levels of government to take action. The TCSA suggested that high levels of concentrated poverty were "a significant threat to the region's economic competitiveness" (Drummond in SNTF 2005, 9).

In response to these recommendations, the City and UWGT together created the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force (SNTF). With $185,000 in support from federal and provincial governments, and with participation from community, labour, and business organizations; the SNTF developed a methodology for identifying service needs and gaps. Effectively, nine neighbourhoods were identified in the final report, "SNTF: Call to Action" (2005) based on socio-demographic data combined with an analysis of existing services that indicated areas of high needs and underinvestment. An additional four neighbourhoods were included based on the City's Community Safety Plan.

The Priority Neighbourhood strategy has entailed a dramatic shift in government and community-sector approaches to service delivery and social capacity-building. Alignment at all three levels of government has culminated in a tripartite agreement to target investment toward "revitalization" of neighbourhoods (Matthews 2008; SNTF 2005). Service Canada has drawn on the strategy to guide frontline investment, while the provincial government is fronting capital costs for building community health centres. The Ontario government has also transferred $15 million to the United Way toward developing the Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) to provide leadership and job opportunities for youth in the Priority Neighbourhoods. The United Way, responsible for administering the program, contributed an additional $15 million, and raised the final third through private donations to reach $45 million.

The City of Toronto has introduced a **Neighbourhood Action Strategy** in each of the Priority Neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood Action Teams (NATs) were set up to coordinate service delivery across city departments, while Neighbourhood Action Partnerships (NAPs) include city workers, social service staff, and community members. The city has also invested $13 million toward physical infrastructure in each of the 13 neighbourhoods and has leveraged an additional $88 million through partnerships (Matthews 2008).

Working with the city, the United Way developed its own **Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy** (BSNS), which has a number of components. From an investment perspective, the UWGT has committed 75% of all new annual funds to the Priority Neighbourhoods. Similarly, based on UWGT's goal to incorporate two new

member agencies per year, this process also targets Toronto's inner suburbs. Following the UWGT's 2003 Community Impact Strategy, two new units were instituted that have marked a transformation in the structure of the organization: the Community Capacity Building Unit and the Public Policy Unit. The BSNS is a unique initiative that runs alongside the base of the membership model, which provides core funding to member agencies. The BSNS includes investment in community service hubs, community development grants, and resident engagement.

A key piece of this strategy is the Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) initiative, which is geared toward building resident capacity and encouraging engagement. In each of the 13 neighbourhoods, the ANC sites are led by a select member agency, which is responsible for hiring and managing ANC staff. The expressed aim of the ANC is "to establish resident-led neighbourhood associations that will produce a vision, and develop plans to bring about positive change in their communities" (UWGT, n.d.). This aim is supported with an initial intensive period of funding at a rate of $250,000 for the first two years that permits the hiring of 2.5 staff members and offers a series of small "Quickstart" grants to support resident-led projects. After the first two years, the ANC projects are sustained at a reduced annual rate of $100,000.

The Priority Neighbourhood designation has induced infusions of capital and spurred new programs and practices in communities, and yet there is no simple or singular motivation for the targeted approach. In fact, there are two dominant and quite different rationales for targeted or "place-based" approaches that are

foundational to the PN framework. These rationales underpin distinct forms of investment with varying impacts on communities. On the one hand, targeted investment is understood as a response to decades of underinvestment and population change. A history of underinvestment in social and physical infrastructure was already evident in 1978 when the "Metro Suburbs in Transition" report identified widespread gaps in public services. These public service gaps only deepened in the two decades between the publication of "Metro Suburbs in Transition" and the municipal amalgamation in 1998.

At that time, many programs and offices that were previously located in the former boroughs, such as the **Community Social Planning Council**, were forced, in the face of budget cuts, to move and concentrate resources downtown. This meant less local presence and an impaired ability to react to local community needs (Zizys et al. 2004). Major shifts in the housing stock and populations of these areas over the past few decades have given rise to different lifestyles and service needs in areas. These challenges are acute in the suburbs, because the physical form of suburban landscapes was designed for a culture of auto-mobility and single-family housing that no longer makes sense.

The number of high-density apartment towers, social housing, transit dependency, immigration, and manufacturing job loss through deindustrialization, require new infrastructural and programming resources to support the needs of growing and changing populations. The City of Toronto is largely motivated by this reasoning and consequently directs its investment towards physical and social infrastructure as well as support for better in-

tegration of existing human services through the NAP.

### The Problem with "Neighbourhood Effects": Blaming Poor People for Poverty

The second rationale for a place-based approach is far more contentious. This rationale relies on social and cultural assumptions about poor neighbourhoods and the people who live in them. These arguments are controversial and the programs they inspire are heavily criticized, precisely because they invest responsibility for localized poverty in the people and places where it is immediately experienced. While in practice, arguments that emerge out of "neighbourhood effects" claims are mobilized in concert with arguments about underinvestment identified above; their logic and implications are profoundly different.

"Neighbourhood effects" suggest that independent of variables such as individual or family poverty, living in neighbourhoods with high levels of poverty has a negative impact on social development (Galster et al. 1999; Wilson 1987). These claims have been particularly powerful in the trend to "deconcentrate" poverty, as poor neighbourhoods are understood in this tradition to be a cause of poverty. The discourse on neighbourhood effects has had widespread take-up in public policy despite serious challenges to its methodological integrity and explanatory power.

On the one hand, as Ellen and Turner (1997) argue, results of the "neighbourhood effects" thesis are inconclusive when other variables are carefully controlled. Neighbourhood effects research relies on data from families of similar economic status and social background living in different neighbourhood types. It does not con-

trol for mitigating factors such as personal contacts and underlying conditions, nor does it analyze the same individual under different conditions (Oreopoulis 2008). Even when correlation between neighbourhoods and social trajectories are evident, it is difficult to determine the direction of causality. As Klassen (2010) argues, "because much of this research is quantitative, its conclusions can only confidently identify correlation, which of course does not equal causation."

In fact, studies that make a serious attempt to account for these methodological limitations have found that peer group influences, school contacts and household factors evidence much higher correlation than "neighbourhood" to future socio-economic status, educational attainment, employment or social assistance usage. At best, the effect of neighbourhood, independent of other variables, is dramatically unclear (Ellen and Turner 1997; Oreopolis 2008; Page and Solon 2001).

A second significant critique of this literature targets the *explanations* it offers for poverty. In a seemingly circular move, proponents of "neighbourhood effects" assign responsibility for poverty to poor neighbourhoods themselves. The argument is reminiscent of the "culture of poverty" thesis from the early 20th century and suggests that *poor neighbourhoods contain and propagate behaviours and influences that create poverty and marginality*. A key difference between these literatures is that responsibility for a cycle of poverty is now assigned to the neighbourhood itself and only indirectly to poor people. But regardless of whether it is poor people or the effects of their neighbourhoods that are held responsible for poverty, the lens in this analysis is entirely localized. The implications of this manoeuvre are profound; "neighbourhood effects" pathologize poverty and the behaviours of people and families who live in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of poverty (Bauder 2002).

The social polarization and growth of poverty that we see locally in the maps of Toronto in chapter 2 and that have been documented across the advanced capitalist world, are features of complex social relationships at many scales, including the globalization of the economy, federal and provincial policies, and myriad actors and relations located *outside poor neighbourhoods*. The neighbourhood effects tradition cannot explain why poverty has grown and become more concentrated in cities across the advanced capitalist world over the past four decades. Indeed, such a localized theory misses the profound political, economic and social changes that generate these conditions.

Poverty is certainly associated with inadequate nutrition, high levels of stress and chronic health problems (Mikkonen and Raphael 2010), but there is little consensus to support the assumption that high-poverty neighbourhoods, independent of the residents' own poverty, produce a multiplier effect of social ills. Neighbourhoods with predominantly low-income residents tend to be underserviced, relative to middle- and upper-class areas, due to their limited consumer power and tax contributions.

"Neighbourhood effects" explanations for targeted intervention take very different shape on the ground compared with arguments that centre on historical legacies of disinvestment and ongoing population change. The latter argument, that inner

suburban areas are underserviced, have experienced population change, and hold particular challenges for low-income and transit-dependent people, prompts practical investments in physical and social infrastructure. Improving human services, creating more facilities and programs, and enhancing mobility and accessibility are all meaningful local responses to these trends.

The second style of argument drawn from the "neighbourhood effects" literature suggests that growing concentrations of neighbourhood poverty cultivates behavioural and cultural problems that create further poverty. Residents are described as disengaged, disillusioned, isolated, and in need of new and typically *middle-class models* of civic engagement (Curley 2010). "Neighbourhood revitalization" in this tradition tends to be aimed at behavioural interventions, such as those that aim to cultivate "resident engagement."

Legacies of disinvestment and population change in the inner suburbs are widely accepted problems that motivate the development of targeted investment in Toronto. However, "neighbourhood effects" arguments have also been explicitly mobilized in the crafting of the PN framework. These arguments have been deliberately invoked, despite the problems with this body of research, and despite the problems and ambivalence expressed in the SNTF's own background research.

Early reports commissioned by the SNTF express some caution about place-based approaches to neighbourhood poverty, yet later reports convey none of that ambivalence. In the background report prepared for the SNTF entitled "Why Strong Neighbourhoods Matter: Implications for Policy

and Practice," author Christa Freiler (2004) presents a review of the literature on place-based investment and documents findings from initiatives undertaken in other cities. She examines the impacts of place-based approaches to neighbourhood poverty from the United Kingdom and the United States, finding serious problems and limitations with the initiatives. Following a critical review of the United Kingdom's New Deal for Communities (NDC) Freiler focuses on the United States' highly contentious Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC). The EZ/EC was initiated in 1993 and launched in 1994 by the Clinton Administration as a "community empowerment program" to "enable communities to take responsibility for their own futures" (HUD 1994 in Gittell 2001, 4); the strategy includes federal provision of block grants to community agencies and tax incentives for zone businesses.

Freiler's background report indicates contradictory goals in this program that "have not been linked to a coordinated structural strategy to address poverty and deprivation" (2004, 25). Limitations have been charged at the targeted nature of the zones, which fails to build connections beyond place to actually affect change and also misses many individuals and communities in need.

Analyses of the EZ/EC approach suggest that the program primarily benefits the private sector and government at the expense of residents and community agencies. Too little opportunity for meaningful control over decision-making and agenda-setting in local communities and the failure to think beyond "place" have brought charges that the EZ/EC has facilitated gentrification in inner-city neighbourhoods

and has been characterized as a "missed opportunity" that has failed to facilitate the empowerment of local residents (Dockeray-Ojo and Velarde 1996, Gittell 2001, Hyra 2008).

These learnings are particularly prescient in the Toronto case. Despite the cautions and caveats in the SNTF background research, the final call for action report purges this complexity and wholly ignores the problems associated with place-based strategies and the research that supports them. Instead the SNTF affirms this contentious approach, supporting a local "neighbourhood-effects" orthodoxy.

> *Neighbourhood decline is characterized by the out-migration of better-off families, overall depopulation, low income levels and dependency on income support programs, high crime rates, high substance abuse rates, high mortality rates and loss of businesses... Research from the UK, the US and Canada confirms that neighbourhood conditions affect the health, school readiness, educational attainment and employment of their residents.* (SNTF, 2005, 12)

### An "Astonishing Turnaround" in Neighbourhood Poverty?

Nowhere is this kind of celebration of the U.S. model so clear or so troubling than in the most widely read of all the documents surrounding the PN strategy: the United Way's 2004 report "Poverty by Postal Code" (PBPC). Like the SNTF final report, "Poverty by Postal Code" makes the case for investment in neighbourhoods by citing the success of place-based initiatives in the U.S. and the U.K. It goes so far as to proclaim that as a result of place-based policy, the United States has seen an "astonishing turnaround in the number of

high poverty neighbourhoods in that country" (UWGT 2002, 3). Researchers would usually marshal a wide body of literature in order to support such a bold claim that counters voluminous scholarship documenting the growth of poverty in the U.S.

In this case, only one report is cited to support this highly counterintuitive claim: a 2003 Brookings Institute paper. In this report, entitled "Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s," author Paul Jargowsky does indeed affirm that inner-city neighbourhoods have seen a reduction in concentrated poverty, but he goes on to say:

> *Poverty rates actually increased along the outer edges of central cities and in the inner-ring suburbs of many metropolitan areas, including those that saw dramatic declines in poverty concentration... It is notable that in a decade of widespread economic growth...the fact that inner-ring suburbs declined during this period is really quite* **astonishing***."* (Jargowsky 2003, 12; emphasis in original)

In other words, Jargowsky reports that the "stunning progress" in the decline of concentrated poverty is a feature of the "hidden problem" of inner-city gentrification. United Way researchers cited this report to support the effectiveness of place-based approaches to poverty reduction, when in fact, Jarkowsky's report very clearly identifies that ***poverty has been relocated, not reduced***. Mobilizing this research to support place-based strategies in the inner suburbs, when in essence it traces the movement of poverty from the gentrifying inner city to the declining inner suburbs, is at best irresponsible.

### 3.2 The Limits of Place-based Approaches

There is certainly merit to investing in social and physical infrastructure in under-serviced neighbourhoods, particularly when underinvestment is compounded by sustained population change. Nevertheless, there is a range of practical problems with geographically targeted approaches when they are adopted in isolation from more systemic strategies for addressing the growth of concentrated and racialized poverty.

First, as we have already suggested, place-based approaches over-valorize the neighbourhood as the site of intervention. Neighbourhood-scale approaches do not respond to the complex factors that are generating increasing levels of polarization, segregation and racialization in cities. Place-based approaches may mitigate effects of poverty rather than create enduring change. As one informant explains:

> *There needs to be a conscious recognition of the need to be working on multiple levels… Many of the issues we are dealing with are structural and you are actually not going to change them on the neighbourhood level. What we're going to change on the neighbourhood level is maybe people's quality of life or experience of it, unless we are working on changes to education systems,* Safe Schools Act*, or people's access to income security, or quality of work.* (Interview 8)

Targeted initiatives are also limited by fixed boundaries that do not correspond with communities of affinity and the geographies of everyday life. While quantitative analysis of the geographies of poverty may generate maps with clear patterns and sharp lines, people's lives are far more complicated than the location of their home address. This is certainly not to say that geography does not matter, but rather that there are multiple geographies that define peoples' lives. For instance, many residents in KGO attend religious services, commute to work or school, and participate in ethnic, educational, cultural or recreational activities outside of the city-defined neighbourhood. Likewise, many people who reside outside the boundaries of the PN, engage in such activities within the area.

This insight is particularly relevant to the large immigrant communities that make up much of the population in Priority Neighbourhoods. Immigrant communities, particularly those made up of newcomers, typically organize in social and spatial networks. Not only are the residential geographies of many immigrant communities more complex than place-based policy allows, so too are the issues these communities may be working to address.

The most pressing issues for immigrant communities are often related to issues of natural and social disaster in their home countries or problems with Canadian immigration and foreign policy, rather than the highly localized conditions of the neighbourhoods in which they live. One group we spoke to that offers a peer support group for Tamil residents to "talk about the trauma [in Sri Lanka] to support one another" sees clients from across the city. When asked if their clients all came from KGO, the informant replied:

> *No, no. Most of them are from Scarborough. Only one or two, three from Markham. Most are from Scarborough, but two or three are from this neighbourhood (interview 5).*

This problem has become acute for agencies that work with residents outside their home area. Another example comes from a women's shelter, which for safety reasons will not house women and children experiencing abuse in the vicinity of their homes. Placing victims of abuse in the vicinity of their abusers poses obvious safety risks. The Redwood, a shelter located in Parkdale, provides housing and support, primarily to women from the former suburbs. Yet because their Parkdale location does not correlate with the population that they serve they are ineligible for priority funding.

Access to programs funded through the PN strategy is also typically contingent on residents' living within a priority neighbourhood; residents' participation in a program or access to services is often permitted only if they reside within the PN boundaries. Many of the informants we interviewed could only offer their services or programs to people who lived within the PN boundaries and described the ethical dilemmas they faced having to exclude people based purely on home address. This spatial bounding of investment appears arbitrary to those that do not benefit from the priority neighbourhood designation and coalesces with the perception in other communities that this model drains resources from other city neighbourhoods.

Nevertheless, a more profound problem haunts place-based interventions. Targeted investment may improve neighbourhood infrastructure, but there is no reliable evidence to suggest that it reduces poverty. We have seen that the literature marshalled to support the use of place-based strategies for poverty reduction in key documents like "Poverty by Postal Code," in fact documents the displacement

of people living in poverty and not the decline of poverty itself. When we describe the growth of poverty in the city in recent decades we cite factors such as the rise in precarious service-sector work and the gutting of social protections that has taken place nationally and across the advanced capitalist countries, but somehow there is an expectation that solutions targeted at very local scales can be effective in response. There is untenable incongruence between explanations for how poverty is produced and the prescription for response at the neighbourhood scale.

In fact, when place-based approaches are guided by assumptions of "neighbourhood effects" and take the shape of resident engagement initiatives rather than poverty reduction or economic development, they actually risk exacerbating some of the experiences of poverty that they ostensibly aim to mediate.

As we explore in more detail below and in chapter 4, the assumptions that underpin much of this work misdiagnose the limited skills development and social networks that are often endemic to poor neighbourhoods as a problem of "resident engagement" rather than one of persistent barriers to accessing social, economic and cultural resources. These assumptions often conceal the fact that residents in poor communities invest significant amounts of time, labour, and resources into their communities (Perrons & Skyers 2003).

Approaches that identify "resident engagement" as both the problem and the solution to neighbourhood poverty also often conceal the rampant racism and discrimination that residents encounter when they try to make change.

Finally, a diagnosis that the problem in poor communities is primarily cultural or behavioural and can be transformed through resident engagement may promote a form of aggressive volunteerism with little benefit to residents.

### 3.3 Social Capital and Capacity *Draining*

Like "neighbourhood effects" arguments, popular theories of "social capital" invest responsibility for poverty into poor neighbourhoods and poor people. Also like "neighbourhood effects" arguments, popular theories of social capital have been explicitly mobilized in the design of the Priority Neighbourhoods.

The SNTF background reports draw on social capital research that defines the concept as "those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems" (Sirianni and Friedland, cited in Freiler 2004). The report relies heavily on the most popular theories of social capital outlined in the work of Robert Putnam. In his well-known 2000 book, titled *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Putnam argues that democracy is at risk in the United States because of a widespread decline in civic engagement, measured by a drop in membership in formal groups and organizations since the 1960s.

The actual meaning of the concept of "social capital" remains ambiguous in the SNTF reports, which is a broader feature of the discourse on social capital that Putnam inspired. Indeed, Margit Mayer, professor at Berlin's John F. Kennedy Institute, has argued that despite the concept's contested and ambiguous status in scholarly debate, it has been adopted with confidence in some sectors of the social policy field (2003, 114). In fact for Mayer, the

concept is not only ambiguous, but it is actually chaotic and circular in its current use. "A central definitional weakness continues to pervade the literature," she argues, by "the identification of 'social capital' with the resources obtained through it" (Mayer 2003, 113). She pursues this conceptual circularity to uncover serious methodological problems with social capital research, similar to those that characterize neighbourhood effects. Pointing to the "tautological use" of social capital "as both explanation and object being explained" Mayer finds it unsurprising that "researchers find statistical correlations – e.g., 'neighbourhoods with higher levels of social capital… are more likely to remain stable over time… Both loyalty and attachment to neighbourhood are higher in neighbourhoods that remain stable over time.' "

Putnam's research distinguishes between "bonding" and "bridging" social capital; bonding capital involves close, supportive relationships within communities and bridging capital entails more distant horizontal connections between members of different types of communities and backgrounds. This distinction between bonding and bridging capital takes on particular force in the context of urban poverty because, as Curley writes, "in high-poverty areas, residents' social capital is thought to be limited since their neighborhood life (and presumably their social worlds) involves interactions and exchanges primarily with other severely disadvantaged people."

This approach to urban poverty sees concentrations of poor people as central to the problem of poverty. Thus it is hardly surprising that the SNTF background report outlines the importance of strength-

ening bridging capital to enhance "porosity" rather than "solidarity'" (Freiler 2004, 13), in order to connect residents with mainstream norms and to attract middle-class residents to the area (Freiler 2004, 12-16).

Indeed, theories of social capital inspired by Putnam's work tend to see the problem in poor neighbourhoods as a lack of social assets, rather than their persistent marginalization. Putnam's theories encourage a focus on the local and have contributed to the rise of place-based approaches and "neighbourhood-effects" discourses. Indeed, they have coalesced in much policy work to suggest that high-poverty neighbourhoods are lacking in social capital where residents are conceived to be socially isolated, disengaged, and disconnected from mainstream societal norms (Wilson 1987, Warren et al. 2001).

In sharp contrast, Saegert et al. (2001, 15) assert "the social assets of poor communities may be ineffective because they are isolated from or undermined by mainstream political institutions," not because they don't exist. Indeed, social capital arguments in this tradition are known to recast longstanding debates about poverty into problems *within* local communities, downloading responsibility to local communities as well. As Mayer writes:

> [Social capital's] avoidance of "traditional categories" (such as power, domination, exploitation) and the picturing of contemporary processes of marginalization of problems of insufficiently mobilized "social capital" direct attention to the self-activation of different communities, whether in the form of civic engagement of well-to-do volunteers or in the form of activation/reinsertion (in-

> to the low wage labour market) of the marginalized. (Mayer 2003, 111)

Despite their popularity, Putnam's theories don't exhaust the field of social capital. Other conceptions avoid some of the problems like localism associated with Putnam's approach and can help identify productive directions for intervention. Saegert et al. (2001) argue that dominant streams within social capital research often depoliticize poverty, but that this is not a necessary feature of the concept. In fact, they suggest that social capital can support an approach to community development rooted in community organizing for systemic change. They argue:

> The political will to seek broader institutional transformation is likely to come, at least in part, from poor communities themselves. A social asset-building approach, in fact, may be the most promising strategy for generating the power necessary to demand such change. (Saegert et al. 2001, 6)

Many alternative theories draw inspiration from a fundamentally different theoretical basis in the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who employed the same term to describe the networks, norms, knowledges, and practices that reproduce power and privilege, but also inequality. Bourdieu emphasizes the role that social capital plays in defining social groups, and in supporting social mobility as well as social exclusion.

Indeed, Bourdieu's approach allows for a more nuanced recognition that active engagement can coexist with active marginalization, because it recognizes the role of social power in recognizing and responding to those skills and networks. A model

of social capital focused narrowly on promoting engagement through organizations, itself can actively ignore or marginalize the forms found in high-poverty neighbourhoods, like building social networks for survival and strong solidaristic ties (Curley 2010).

Many residents in KGO have exceptionally high levels of community involvement, as we discuss in more detail below (see also Figure 12). This suggests, in concert with Saegert et al. (2001) that it is not social capital *per se* that is lacking in a community like KGO, but rather that there are barriers to the translation of those initiatives, skills, knowledge, and supporting networks into individual and community development.

What follows are just a few of many examples to illustrate that residents are highly engaged, creative, and resilient; the problem is not that residents are "bowling alone" but as Perrons and Skyers (2003) state, the problem is one of social power and poverty.

- Many residents attend multiple weekly meetings, organize community events and act as tenant representatives for TCHC, with some residents reporting 20 to 40 hours a week of volunteer work.
- Groups such as ANASA (a collective that supports the holistic development and prosperity of young women of colour) and Vasanthum (Tamil health support and wellness) operate an impressive array of programs and services without core program funding, staff support, or regular access to space.
- Residents of a low-rent high-rise have described a communal system of caring at the level of the building, which includes regular collective cooking, food

and resource sharing, and childcare on a daily basis.

Indeed, in the context of an economically challenged neighbourhood where many residents are highly skilled and educated yet unable to find full-time work, excessive volunteerism can contribute to burnout and disappointment when there is little opportunity for paid-work or leadership capacity. Many residents expressed during focus groups, that there is no opportunity for leadership through the agencies in the community. Others expressed frustration that the community development workers recently hired to organize in KGO have been brought in from other areas rather than drawing on the skills and knowledges of current active residents. One interviewee succinctly summarized the impacts of an endless cycle of volunteer responsibilities, *"Volunteer, volunteer, volunteer. How can they live volunteering?"* (Interview 7).

The complicated relationship between community building as paid work or as voluntary commitment is accentuated by the ANC animator model. As part of the two-year intensive ANC funding, there is an opportunity to hire four or five resident community members on a part-time, contract basis to animate and bring more members on board. In KGO there was a perception that this model was divisive in that it encouraged resentment among unpaid participants and also that it set up an expectation for a job that would not exist after the end of the two-year period.

To mitigate these problems in KGO, the funding for animators has been distributed more broadly on a contract basis to work on specific projects. For instance, researchers were hired and trained to conduct surveys. If the next project in-

volves, for example, a garden event and an entirely different skill set, then different residents may be hired (Interview 2).

Another informant who works extensively with local residents spoke critically on the widespread emphasis on volunteerism and the problems this poses in a poor community:

*I don't want to use volunteers, especially volunteers who live in poverty – take advantage of them. Anyone who came to meetings, events… great, they were volunteers, but if I asked them to do something… Do outreach from 10-12 every morning this week in a certain location, then they were given honoraria…So if over and above their original involvement and commitment, I really believe we have to somehow support them in some way….I really feel that in some ways people living in poverty get fed up and walk away from volunteering…they feel abused. They get trotted out and put in front of microphones, "Yes, I live in poverty, I'm on disability…" then it's just "Go away now, we'll call you next time we have a press conference." It's just so, so wrong.* (Interview 9)

Other interviewees also raised concerns about the nature of organizing, querying whether festivals, meetings, and barbecues will actually transform life chances. One resident has described the ANC efforts so far, as a missed opportunity to address policy and systemic issues:

*Investment in social capital is bringing people together. Whether it's working is another question… In terms of poverty reduction, it is not making any difference.* (Interview 13)

This resident has approached multiple ANC sites in an attempt to develop a coordinated effort to fight poverty but has been met with resistance.

*Poverty reduction needs to be linked with the grassroots… how do we impact change? Address policy? If you don't do this, what is the point?* (Interview 13)

An approach that focuses on change and recognition of local strengths and needs, which includes developing a well-thought-out payment structure for residents' work, is a step towards a more supportive capacity-building form of social capital. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of social capital means moving away from cultural or behavioural solutions and towards addressing the impact of uneven access to skills development and resources. Doing so can strengthen social networks, skills and relationships:

• Residents are eager to develop and share skills within the community. For example, one senior resident who formerly worked as a carpenter wanted to organize trades-training workshops, but has found little support. There was a high level of interest among focus group participants in workshops and other forms of education in the neighbourhood. One resident has initiated efforts to get not-for-credit university courses taught in the community.

• One resident noted that having a connection to the ANC and to the storefront is a form of power that is unequally enjoyed and can contribute to exclusion in the community. There needs to be more recognition of other forms of community organizing as well as more active outreach to community members who are not already connected.

| Day | Hours | Task |
|---|---|---|
| Monday | 1 | Went to the office and spoke to staff about fixing and the cost of the doors. |
| Tuesday | 1.5 | I spoke to staff about applying for a maintenance grant then we did a walk around with another staff person discussing the problems around the community. |
| Wednesday | 0.25 | I called the city councillor's office for an appointment; I also called ANC staff to set up the meeting. |
| Thursday | 0.75 | I went to Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC). I contacted TCHC staff and informed her on what was going on at the meeting. |
| Friday | 1.5 | I saw TCHC staff about youth issues then called the office about repairs. I also called back the councillor's office about the appointment. |
| Monday | 3 | I attended a meeting at the councillor's office to discuss plans for neighbourhood improvements. I saw ANC staff and did a walk around with the councillor. I also spoke to TCHC staff to inform her how the meeting went. |
| Tuesday | 0.5 | I contacted the call centre to do a follow up on work and they informed me that it would be fixed by spring. |
| Wednesday | 2.5 | I attended a food festival hosted by ANC. |
| Friday | 0.5 | I spoke to ANC staff about the application process about the quick start grant and I also spoke to TCHC staff about the upcoming meetings and about the landscaping grant that we're applying for. |

**Figure 12:** Two weeks in the life of a KGO resident

- The East Scarborough Storefront has set up a "Neighbourhood Trust" to support grassroots projects and a business incubator to support community economic development and local employment.

### 3.4 Organizational Social Capital and Capacity at the Neighbourhood Scale

Just as distinct approaches to social capital can either drain or build capacity at the individual or resident scale, we see a similar need to develop supportive practices and processes at an organizational level in order to avoid diminishing effects.

*Organizational Status*

Many of the smaller and less structured groups have overcome disproportionate hurdles to keep offering programs and services. It is exceedingly difficult for smaller grassroots groups to secure any kind of funding, as the requirements attached to most grants require charitable status and evidence of a stable, mainstream organization. The judgment process through which organizations are deemed stable sets up layers of bureaucracy, which groups with strained resources are forced to develop merely to be able to apply for funds.

One approach is to develop charitable organizational status, which is a cumbersome process that enforces a number of organizational requirements and prescriptions on structure and accountability that may detract from the core work that groups have set out to do. Other than the City, the United Way is one of the few funders that will provide core funding to agencies, but has a strong prescriptive framework and criteria system for what makes a "strong agency."

Another option for small groups is to apply for grants through the support of an established organization that will trustee the funds. However, the trustee relationship is one that is particularly onerous for small groups, where it is typically the larger agency that holds all of the power.

One story of disempowerment came from a small organization trying to navigate funding and trustee relationships. The group persisted after multiple rejections for funding based on their lack of organizational status, while continuing to operate programs without funds to pay program workers. Their first trustee relationship siphoned 15% of their funding, yet still required the volunteer board to do the accounting and administration. Currently they are trusteed through a much larger community organization, which takes 25% of the funds and which hired a staff member to oversee the account without any direct consultation. The lack of input that the group has over the administrative staff member and management of the funds makes members feel that there is little interest in and accountability to the community, "This is for [our] community, and we are the ones who wrote the proposal." The trustee relationship is then linked to the experience of patriarchal oppression:

*It's like the power you feel, the power is with them… It's like the women feeling powerlessness when the men don't give them any money… Even when her mother is in the camp and crying and…everyone is tortured, but she can't send any money. He controls.* (Interview 7)

For these reasons and others, there is an important trend emerging in the sector to explore different kinds of relationships with intermediaries. One very promising

model that has seen success in KGO is Tides Canada. This is an organization devoted entirely to providing financial and project management services to philanthropists, foundations, activists, and civil organizations. Because Tides is not involved in service delivery or other frontline activities that parallel the organizations they work with, they are able to devote their energies entirely towards providing management support.

Participants also shared stories of tremendously supportive and collaborative relationships between funders and small organizations. A number of informants highlighted the critical role that financial support played when it came from a funder who did not direct the process. They flagged the interventionist role that most funders play, which leaves little room for communities to develop their own methods and plans. When funders don't try to directly govern the contents of the projects they fund, they often do so indirectly through the accountability measures they impose on agencies. These dominant relationships with funders made the ones that don't take this form precious.

*They allow you freedom without superimposing their agenda or their expectations or their "measurables," or whatever you want to call them. They don't have them. All they require is a report once a year in narrative form. Which is great: tell your story of the last year and then at the end, tell us your learning.* (Interview 9)

Funders who are open to gradual change, who value process as well as results, and who evaluate projects and agencies on a case-by-case basis rather than with standard indicators, are rare but valuable. In-

deed, this funder has consistently supported initiatives in the community that have been vital to the creativity and strength of KGO, from the early work of developing a local public forum for community issues to the creation of a large advocacy campaign for improved transit service. The injection of capital into a community by a funder who recognizes that supporting a community also means supporting efforts to develop its strategies, visions, and approaches is key part of the puzzle of social infrastructure.

### Project Funding and Capacity Draining

The lack of opportunities for new initiatives to obtain core funding in the social service sector has become chronic. The struggles that community agencies face have been well documented (Eakin 2004; Zizys et al. 2004) and are substantiated by our interviewees. The increasing reliance on project funding in the sector necessitates a high level of competition between agencies and consequent lack of cooperation between similar organizations.

The lack of core funding and the reliance on project funding also mean that there is unnecessary interruption or cessation of initiatives that are working well on the ground. In fact, project funding means that successful projects must end and that staff need to recast the project into another form if they want to get funding again. The impacts of this hurdle are severe: staff spend a lot of time applying for grants rather than doing front-line work and skilled workers cannot be maintained on a part-time or piecemeal basis as they need full-time work. Ironically, the most successful initiatives cannot be sustained.

Although the ANC projects are praised for their long-term, permanent funding, the drastic reduction of the budget to less than half after the two-year period epitomizes the many concerns raised by the project-funding model. The reduced budget supports less than half the number of staff members and relies on an extreme and fast entrepreneurialism whereby individual ANC sites are forced to develop their own strategies to secure the remaining funds to maintain the programs and outreach developed over the first two years. The proximity between some of the priority neighbourhoods may mean competition between the ANC sites themselves to bring in private fundraising dollars.

This comes back to social capital debates, because one of the primary arguments about poor neighbourhoods is that even if the skill is there, there is a transience to the population, as it is often assumed that people who do well will not stay in the neighbourhood. In effect, the interruption of initiatives and the fractured nature of skills and capacity is often understood as a feature of poor neighbourhoods rather than a feature of poor policy.

If building social capital is key to the development of the strong neighbourhoods strategy, a more concerted effort to provide stable funding and support for organizational autonomy needs to be central to capacity-building initiatives. Finally, it would be valuable to consider ways to create opportunities for residents of priority areas to stay in place as a component of the neighbourhood strategies, if either their own financial situation improves or the neighbourhood itself experiences reinvestment and housing becomes less affordable.

# 4. PLANNING, PARTNERSHIPS, AND RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

## 4.1 Collaboration and Community Planning

The initiation of the Priority Neighbourhoods framework entailed profound changes in community planning. The scale of this change becomes clear when we consider that the framework is responsible for defining the boundaries of community and not simply planning and governing within a pre-established community.

In a sense, PN designation has brought a new jurisdiction into being, while transforming relationships among and between residents, government, and the non-profit sector. These changes have brought new opportunities for collaboration, participatory democracy, and resident leadership, but they can also aggravate established inequality and exclusion, download responsibility and labour onto an already under-resourced community, and may conceal rather than expose power relations.

Although the language of "planning" and "governance" is often understood in terms of formal governmental and legal relationships, we adopt a broader conception of the term to understand how decisions, plans, and programs are deliberated, rationalized, and implemented. These power relations and decision-making processes exist at the smallest scale of local group formation as well as at larger scales of agencies and governments and can be informal as well as more formalized.

This chapter explores the complexities of recent changes in KGO, highlighting a series of opportunities for supporting collaboration, inclusivity, and empowerment in the everyday life of community planning and leadership.

### Sharing Power and Information

The promise of collaborative planning at the community scale is one of the most valued features of the Priority Neighbourhood framework. Research participants from KGO were overwhelmingly supportive of the efforts that have come with PN designation to make community planning a more cooperative process, although some suggested ways to make those efforts more effective. Meanwhile, several participants from Parkdale spoke longingly of community planning initiatives and the collaborative approaches to resource and information sharing, visioning, and planning that they can enable.

The most significant and formal of the initiatives that come with PN designation is the Neighbourhood Action Partnership (NAP). NAP is a City initiative that brings together municipal staff, non-profit agencies, and resident organizers to work interdivisionally and intersectorally to better serve "at-risk" areas. Before NAP, the City created a Neighbourhood Action Team (NAT) for each of the Priority Neighbourhoods. The NATs had a mandate that was more precise than the partnerships that would follow; they were geared entirely towards breaking down silos within city systems. As one participant from the city of Toronto explained:

> *The city is a fairly large bureaucracy, the sixth largest government in Canada, and although it's a municipality, because we are*

*a $10 billion order of government, we're fairly siloed, like any large government, and we've got real issues in terms of how we align our activity… It becomes really apparent when you talk to a public health staff [member] who doesn't know libraries and you talk to a parks and rec staff who doesn't know youth employment… so we had some issues to address in terms of getting our own house in order. (Interview 3)*

The NAP, as the broader planning initiative that includes non-profit and residents' organizations, emerged after some experimentation. The first idea was not to create a partnership, but a plan. As one informant suggested, it became clear to those on the front lines that a "plan" did not capture the spirit of the work that needed to be done in neighbourhoods.

*It's not a plan, it's not a document… The real goal is about creating relationships, it's about creating discussion, it's about creating exchange. You can't control that; you can't "plan" that. And any good community developer knows… you want to set the ground to allow for that kind of engagement, and then you can't plan on where it goes. If it's good engagement, they're going to tell you, it's not about you trying to kind of keep that. (Interview 3)*

Discussions about planning and decision-making are clearly central to the aims of the NAP as this quote suggests, and the transformation of planning is understood as critical to making the process of community development more responsive and effective. The resistance to calcifying the process of neighbourhood planning and the desire to see it remain in the hands of diverse stakeholders in the community prompted some staff to lobby against formalizing the process within the City bureaucracy. While the SNTF encouraged the City to create "community committees" there was some resistance from within the City to keep the NAP from becoming too formalized within municipal government:

*The minute you tie that kind of committee into the city's legislative structure, you kill it. It's no longer a partnership, we're government – if it becomes part of our legislative structure, then we have to control it. That's the nature of government. Once you create a neighbourhood action plan, someone has to approve it, and once it's approved, you deviate and you have to go back. It becomes caught up in the whole legislative framework, and [is] often counterproductive. The downside is, I think the reason SNTF wanted to see it tied into the legislative structure is they thought resources would follow, or better access to resources. (Interview 3)*

At the same time, serious constraints come from the informal structure of the NAP that can place heavy burdens on the local community. Hardwiring the NAP into the City bureaucracy may limit the flexibility and collaborative nature of the process, but it would also mean the City would be responsible for providing the resources necessary for the planning process. The Neighbourhood Action Partnership relies heavily on the contributions of all the people and agencies that participate, which itself can act to reproduce inequality and exclusion. This can happen in very subtle ways that derive from uneven access to resources and staff time to support participation, but it can also come from the bounded nature of social networks in any community.

When so much relies on relationships rather than formal process, exclusion can

actually be intensified. We explore questions of exclusion in more detail in section 4.3, but at this point, is worth flagging how heavily the NAP relies on the community for its basic functioning.

In KGO, local agencies often provide the meeting space. Storefront provides the co-chair, much of the facilitation, and extensive staff support for the process and projects the NAP engages in. From the perspective of some community organizations, the NAP requires more committed resources from the City to be sustainable.

> *To be honest, NAP doesn't have any clear vision for resident engagement and I'm talking about NAP in general. And what I realized [is] that we will involve residents, all because it looks good on them. Oh, we're good at partnership building, but it's totally a very alien concept for city staff. Because they don't have to... are they accountable to community members? No way. They have their own safety net, own safeguard. All the hard work that happened in this community was done by few people. And if [Storefront] didn't play that role, I don't think it would have come to this point. (Interview 13)*

Concerns about the local NAP included a lack of structured support from the City in terms of staff members not having any mandate to be consistently present in the community and to do the work of community building between meetings. Under the current NAP framework, there is no mechanism to ensure that work will be shared across City staff members and collaborating agencies, all of who have different levels of interest in participating. A few dedicated social agency workers carry out the bulk of the work that keeps the NAP process and sub-committees alive in KGO. In

short, the successful process of the NAP in KGO is fostered by the people who make it happen and this kind of deep involvement tends to be optional rather than institutionally encouraged.

Community workers also suggested that the NAP and PN framework failed to resonate with KGO residents. Although residents are called on regularly to participate in local events, the decision-making structure of the NAP process remains alien to those who aren't directly involved in social policy or agency work:

> *With residents it's all blah, blah. They don't understand all of the intricacies and we're doing so many different things that I think we weren't able...to explain in lay terms...what NAP represents.* (Interview 13)

In spite of these limitations, the NAP also supports new and promising initiatives. Participants identified creative projects that have taken place in KGO since the formation of the NAP, and we witnessed the same in our participant observation at community meetings.

The NAP cultivates practices that are unusual at the community scale, particularly in terms of resource and information sharing. Some concrete examples include organizations' planning and coordinating their grant applications in order to avoid unnecessary competition between local groups and to maximize the spread of applications. Resources were also actively shared through the KGO NAP, for instance, at one subcommittee meeting devoted specifically to physical infrastructure improvements, organizations offered the use of office space to another group that would be undergoing extensive renova-

tions to their own facility. In another instance, groups that had never worked together in a direct way came to see a common need for youth programming through their involvement in the NAP and eventually assembled their resources to make it happen. This collaborative work between TCHC, West Hill, and the City of Toronto culture division generated the highly successful youth arts group, "Project Random."

Rather than forcing groups to compete for resources, collaborative planning processes encourage organizations to coalesce their interests with those of the community to maximize the overall effectiveness of their work. In a sense, they "re-scaled" their measures of success and so their actions from the organization to the community. The NAP participants in KGO have helped transform how ideas are generated, which ideas are translated into action, the nature and breadth of networks that are mobilized for collaborative actions, and who participates in decision making.

### Shared Space and Community Hubs
A simple yet important change that has taken place in KGO has been the relocation of aspects of planning *of the neighbourhood to the neighbourhood*. The collaborations identified above are possible in part because people literally *come together* in a local space. Transforming where decision-making takes place is critical to changing how local planning happens. Indeed, there are important relationships between sharing space and sharing power.

Residents and support workers highlight the importance of community space in conversations about the inaccessibility of facilities and the poor transit service that limits mobility, or in relation to the dearth of publicly accessible spaces in the suburban landscape. As one participant commented, "Space. There is never enough" (Interview 1).

Several years after the fact, it is still common for residents and social service providers to bemoan the loss of community space caused by the demolition of Morningside Mall. As one agency staff informant suggested, "losing Morningside mall was huge" (Interview 4). But beyond the general value of space in KGO, it is clear that the sharing of extremely scarce space plays a key role in facilitating collaborative planning. Participants credit the physical interaction and proximity for their creative problem solving.

*Because we physically get to see each other here, it certainly makes partnership happen much more easily, that's for sure. When you're both leaving and find out you are struggling with the same things...it's that ability to work together and create a solution together. (Interview 4)*

This coming together and sharing of space happens explicitly with the local NAP process, but also takes place in the everyday work environment of many organizations in KGO, largely as a result of the Storefront's hub structure. In the words of one participant, "It's certainly made easier in this area because of the Storefront" (Interview 4).

While the NAP comes into being when meetings happen and lives on in the relationships and initiatives it galvanizes, this also requires ongoing support. In the interim, the Storefront provides everyday space for groups and people to connect and work together. There are countless examples of the Storefront's importance in

this regard. One participant describes the key role it played in saving a popular program for people with mental health issues by facilitating a process for community organizations to come together around its fate. When one group could no longer afford to keep supporting the program, the Storefront called a meeting and facilitated a conversation among service providers. The result of this meeting was that another organization agreed to host the program.

These kinds of partnerships, cultivated by the sharing of space in a place like Storefront, often support further collaboration and the sharing of other spaces. As one participant explains, partnerships formed in the context of community planning provide additional opportunities for sharing space for outreach and service provision.

*That's where the partnerships are great... I can call our partner agencies up and find out where they are holding groups, and I'll go to that already existing group and share the information. I find that that's a real time- and labour-power save. (Interview 4)*

It is precisely their success in fostering collaboration and partnerships that has brought so much attention to the Storefront's "hub model." Indeed, the shared space of the Storefront fosters collaboration through a sense of community ownership. As Roche and Roberts (2007, 127) suggest, unique to "the Storefront working group is their commitment to share ownership of such efforts with the community through the establishment of formal arrangements." The storefront's governance structure hardwires power sharing and collaboration right into the hub with a working group structure that draws half of its membership from the community and

half from the service providers that work out of the Storefront.

However, while the Storefront model has inspired interest in building "hubs" across underserviced suburban neighbourhoods, it is not clear that the crucial practices that make the Storefront work so well are being reproduced. One participant, for instance, bemoaned the fact that this key quality is not being replicated in the hubs that the Storefront model has inspired in other neighbourhoods. She questions the outcome of organizations trying to reproduce a hub model without a deep commitment to collaborative process and vision:

*The mentality of a satellite... [contrasts with that] of an organization [or] a group of people co-creating a space in which good stuff can happen. It will be interesting to see... Obviously, in part, it will be the leadership of whoever is there, but I imagine it's going to be different. The sense will be different, the sense of ownership and who gets to sort of sign in and out of the space... You'll be using the policy framework that the organization has as opposed to a community co-creating a policy framework. (Interview 8)*

This sense of ownership is crucial to building linkages across diverse networks and people in the community and beyond. It is also important in encouraging a wide range of people, groups, and institutions to invest in the community, and to value the work and perspectives of others; the cornerstones of social infrastructure. It is thus an open question as to whether a hub model, without the careful commitments to process and collaborative planning, will have the impact its proponents desire.

## 4.2 The Role of Resident Leadership

Participatory planning has been celebrated for its potential to bring traditionally marginalized groups into decision-making roles, thereby challenging status quo power relations. Forrester (1999, 129) emphasizes how a participatory process is also a learning process. It is when participants "come together to discuss means and ends at the same time," and in doing so, transform their ideas, opinions and practical options.

While the ideals of participatory planning emerged out of social justice movements in the global south, they have become so widely implemented, that they are now a form of community development "common sense." Today, participatory planning is espoused even by organizations as far removed from its social movement genesis as the World Bank. Participatory planning can invert entrenched power relations and support local, under-resourced communities, but, depending on the quality of the participatory process, participatory methods can silence and further marginalize the very groups they were initially designed to support (Sarin 2001, Trotter & Campbell 2008, Walker et al. 2007).

Locally, there is broad consensus that planning in the priority neighbourhoods must be inclusive and democratic and that residents of the communities in question must be involved in local decision-making. But despite consensus on the value of these ideals, they tend to mean very different things to organizations and individuals in practice. The widespread promotion of "resident engagement" holds no single meaning on the ground and we see tangible implications of different strategies for engaging residents in terms of resident leadership and community development.

There may be as many different ways of practising resident engagement in the two communities we explored as there are organizations working in those communities. One outstanding example was a Parkdale organization that provides supportive housing and services to psychiatric survivors. This organization is committed to cultivating leadership among the people who use the service without limits (explicit or implicit) in terms of individuals' pre-existing skills and capacities.

The group operates with a membership model and makes extensive investments in skills development, capacity building, and leadership skills training, which are se,part of the goals of the organization. Adult survivors of the psychiatric system constitute the entire membership, and half of the staff and Board members self-identify as survivors. Capacity-building is actively supported through regular and ongoing opportunities; an anti-oppression leadership course serves to build residents' skills and capacities as a pillar of building organizational resilience.

With this type of training, members develop their skills and confidence to then become co-facilitators of future programs. Members may also become "ambassadors," who receive payment to do outreach with other groups in the Parkdale community. The ambassador program has been remarkably successful in cultivating alliances with residents' associations that were at times antagonistic to the organization and its members.

Strong commitments to resident leadership are also successfully practised in smaller groups and programs. A number of groups sustained impressive commit-

ments to resident leadership and skills development, despite their limited resources.

One of many notable examples in Scarborough is a program for Tamil mental health support and wellness. Although this group is run as a program without the administrative and budgetary demands of a large organization, it also operates using a membership model. This group's commitment to members' skills development has allowed the program to shift from initially being staff-led to its current incarnation, in which members do all of the work of chairing and managing the group.

This type of thick commitment to resident leadership can tremendously enrich groups of all types and sizes, as well as the communities they serve, but it is also challenging to support and sustain meaningful resident leadership, particularly in working with high-needs groups. The challenges outlined below confront almost all of the organizations we spoke to.

Three key questions arise:
1. Can organizations prioritize resident leadership and make the process of decision-making part of the capacity-building work they do in the community?
2. Can organizations offer support and skills training so that the work of decision-making is accessible to a broader range of people?
3. Can organizational decision-making be conducted to make it more appealing to residents who are not already involved?

### 1. Making resident leadership part of the mandate

Fostering meaningful resident leadership requires organizations to prioritize its importance. This entails a shift for some or-

ganizations in terms of how they understand their work in the community.

Prioritizing resident leadership means seeing residents not only as clients or service users, but also as partners. Despite unanimous support for the principles of resident engagement, some organizations provide few (if any) opportunities for residents to take on meaningful roles as decision-makers and leaders. Despite a heavy emphasis on resident engagement within the ANC for instance, complicated lines of authority and funding structures do not support residents who want to participate in governance in the organization that has authority over the initiative.

### 2. Rethinking who is capable of taking on leadership positions

Cultivating meaningful and diverse representation of residents in formal and everyday decision-making is a challenge for all organizations. Some endorse resident leadership, but implicitly or explicitly accept limits on how far that commitment goes, or to whom it extends. As one participant explained:

*Our biggest challenge, and it's everybody's biggest challenge… [is that] the people who need our services the most really are not in a position to sit on a steering committee… There's also a certain expectation of education, because we deal with a lot of budgets, we deal with a lot of complex policies and things like that. So it has been difficult. We have, for the past two years pretty much always had a complete steering committee. But service users in the true sense of the word, we have lots of volunteers who are service users and they come to use the computer, they might get some legal advice, but people who are here because they need housing and employment, they're just*

*not at a place in their lives where they can do that. (Interview 2)*

This difficulty can result from practical limits on the resources that organizations can mobilize to support capacity-building; it may reflect a genuine lack of time or interest on the part of residents in participating in more formal decision-making; or it may be a feature of an organization's assumptions about who has the skills and capacity to participate in governance. Often some combination of these factors is involved in setting limits to participation in more formal decision-making (such as boards and sub-committees) and constrains efforts to broaden participation.

### 3. Reaching out to encourage broad and diverse participation

Even if organizations want all residents or service users to participate in organizational decision-making, they still face enormous challenges in meaningfully involving diverse residents. The financial and time resources available to residents affect their level of participation. Awareness of the opportunity to get involved, and a sense that participation is relevant and responds to their interests are both influenced by the outreach and support that organizations extend.

Proactive efforts at outreach can help diversify participation. Although attempts are often made to encourage diverse ethno-racial and gender participation in leadership, the underrepresentation of low-income residents and people with mental health challenges is a perennial problem. Effective outreach to encourage diverse participation requires support for training and other opportunities for residents to develop new skills and confidence within and beyond the organization.

### 4. Supporting skills development

Many groups strive to generate more interest in organizational governance among residents and to build skills that could facilitate that participation. Some organizations have created mentorship and training programs that help residents navigate the world of budgets, bylaws, and bureaucracy.

One organization initiated a board sub-committee comprising only residents in a creative response to this challenge. Staff reports note, *"We created a smaller subcommittee where they can meet and identify challenges, issues, and actions to help support that voice, because you've got a lawyer or somebody else on the board who speaks of authority… So how does the caucus make sure that their voices are also heard? It's a very important piece."* (Interview B2).

The creation of the residents' caucus stemmed from recognition that people from marginalized communities often do not feel comfortable or respected when thrown into a board meeting with more experienced or professionally trained leaders. The caucus works to build a safe and supportive space for residents to develop their voice. Anti-oppression workshops were also helpful in this context for building shared understandings of poverty and other relevant social issues and in order to address the power inequities experienced by members of diverse communities in the larger board environment (see also section 4.4). Because individual organizations typically do not have the funds to implement the capacity-building supports that they would like, community level initiatives organized through NAP or ANC could help close this gap.

## 5. Fostering a range of forms of participation in planning and decision-making

Boards and steering committees will never be fully representative of the people and communities they serve because many people simply do not have the time or interest to make a long-term commitment to taking a formal role on a board or subcommittee. Thus, in order to make decision-making as inclusive and representative as possible, some organizations are experimenting with creative planning initiatives. KGO's "Community Speaks" are an important example.

The Speaks began as a Storefront initiative, but are now community-wide forums that occur 7-8 times a year in which residents gather to discuss and strategize on issues and challenges facing the community. Community Speaks typically attract 50-60 residents and the ideas generated during the two-hour discussions directly inform organizational and community-scale planning.

## 6. Supporting Resident Engagement

Resident engagement has become a cornerstone of participatory planning in Toronto's Priority Neighbourhoods, but as we have heard, this engagement takes a number of different forms on the ground.

We have explored some of the competing visions for residents in community planning: what role residents should play and what kinds of power relations are at stake in this work. Yet one of the most basic questions in any discussion about bringing residents into community planning is the practical matter of how this work gets supported. These logistical challenges are often what makes or breaks plans and visions.

Three key areas emerged through the research where support can facilitate more meaningful participation: mobility, time, and accessibility.

*Mobility:* Mobility is important in any context but takes on even more prominence in low-income suburban communities. The challenge of getting around in the postwar landscape is severe; distances are large and transit service is sparse. With a large population of senior citizens, and other people who may have limited mobility, the challenges are profound.

Focus group participants identified large sections of the pedestrian realm that are impassable in the winter months when snow and ice accumulates. At a minimum, many groups try to provide transit tokens to residents who participate in programs or in the local planning of the community or individual organizations. One local organization offers a shuttle service in response to the issues of safety and territoriality that some youth face when crossing different neighbourhood and gang boundaries. Another hires a driver to transport community members who participate in programs and the Storefront has also been leading efforts to get a community shuttle operating in the neighbourhood to help address these mobility problems. Most groups also make careful deliberations about where to hold meetings, some opting to go to where residents are. As one health promoter suggests:

*As much as we can, we are running the programs where people live. We run programs right in the apartment buildings where people live, so they come down and see the sign and can just poke their head in and see what it's all about... Particularly here in Scarborough where transportation*

*is a huge issue, to try and pull together a group and expect people to spend what it costs for TTC fare to come to a group when they're not sure what it's all about, we tend to go to them... creating programming that is accessible is really important. Out here, it's so different than downtown, where people can just walk to everything they need. (Interview 4)*

*Time:* Respect for the time commitments of residents is also crucial in supporting participation. This requires both a conscious recognition of the amount of time residents volunteer and also the time of the day, week, or year. One important practice involves keeping meetings under their allotted timeframe to avoid extending the workload of residents.

Prioritizing meeting times and locations that are accessible and that work with the realities of peoples' lives is also at the foreground of many groups in the community. When a meeting or event is scheduled near a mealtime, groups with the resources to do so provide food. There is also an effort to avoid scheduling during the workday, Sundays, or religious holidays. Also, the recognition that many active community members are women with children has led groups to ensure that childcare is available at events and that the timing does not conflict with school or daycare pick-up schedules.

*Accessibility:* The means by which accessibility is supported profoundly impacts who can participate in governing. One organization uses the language of "the ramp" to help conceptualize this critical piece of leadership development:

*It's about access and equity, and so we've been using that access and equity through*

*the city and trying to find new ways to identify in the language of the ramp. So if you were going to make a place accessible from a mobility perspective, what's the ramp? And it's pretty standardized tools to figure out how to make accessibility apparent. We don't have that in the same way for impoverished and marginalized communities so therefore what is the ramp? (Interview B2)*

*Poverty in and of itself is a disability in some ways. It's a barrier... If you say that you're working to deal with issues of equity or engagement than you better figure out what your ramp is. You have to. Because in fact that is probably the one thing that is preventing the kind of engagement that you would see. (Interview B2)*

It is clear that the ramp is not merely an economic concept, but also entails a deep commitment to address the multiple barriers that people face that prevent them from participating in public forums. The ramp may be different for each organization.

Accessibility supports include training for administrative and board management skills as well as distinct settings for members with experiences of marginalization to gather and develop their voice and capacities. Mentor support helps new leaders through emotionally challenging moments in fulfilling planning responsibilities. Training in and opportunities to develop other skills, such as public speaking and workshop facilitation, has also enabled residents to build applicable skills and relationships across groups and contexts.

KGO residents have expressed interest in seeing more employment oriented train-

ing as well as resident-directed skills sharing.

However, training and capacity building requires support of a basic and physical kind. This includes support for residents to access the technology required to participate effectively, for example in receiving meeting minutes. It also suggests that the format of meetings, record-keeping and modes of participation may need to be rethought. As one informant explains:

*Boards are expected to process a lot of e-mail, but most people can't afford e-mail. They can't afford a computer, let alone ISP, so we've been looking at ways... You've got to level the playing field to make it equal because you can't have equal participation without some pretty basic stuff... so we provide compensation for folks so they can either help pay for a phone or help pay for ISP, as one of the things where we direct some of our funds. Because it's the only way to do it. So how much does an ISP cost? How can we support you? ... We're going to need to pay some of your costs so that you can participate as equal as the next person. (Interview B2)*

Other technological supports include providing printouts and/or making phone calls to residents who may not use a computer or who may be less comfortable with typed documentation. Similarly, when resources allow, providing computer, fax, and telephone access for community members to use on-site also significantly enhances the accessibility of local planning initiatives.

The concern over residents' roles in leadership positions raises the question: what is the scope of residents' authority and leadership when they are brought into participatory planning processes?

Through the PN strategy, residents are taking on ever-greater responsibilities and more of the labour of community development work, yet they still report few opportunities for meaningful leadership. The respect accorded to residents' voices and leadership does not correspond with the level of time, thought, and efforts that residents contribute. This stems from a model that emphasizes engagement for its own sake, without questioning what the purpose of that engagement should be.

### 4.3 Accountability and Empowerment?

*Action for Neighbourhood Change: "We don't have leadership opportunities right now." (Resident, focus group 1)*

The tension that surrounded the implementation of the ANC in KGO speaks directly to this problem. United Way funds ANC sites in all 13 Priority Neighbourhoods, yet a United Way selected local organization (in KGO, the Storefront) manages the project and the ANC staff members. The United Way's aim for the ANC is to cultivate grassroots community development. However, the structure and governance of the broader initiative is pre-established by the United Way and its design does not draw upon local residents' knowledge. One community member who has been involved in the transition spoke to this:

*How are you going to name it? How are you going to locate it? What would be the identity of the project? How are you going to manage...so there are prescriptions? ... United Way has its own. They're very strong about their identity and this "We*

*want to do it this way" in a prescribed form. It was a very hard negotiation to say that "Your prescription is not going to work here." (Interview 13)*

While there is a strong set of prescriptions and expectations placed upon the ANC sites and local residents by the UWGT, the influence in the other direction is unclear. As one resident explained, *"the point that they're missing is that they can give people tools, that people can do whatever they want and United Way is not responsible for it"* (Interview 13).

While residents are expected to engage and generate ideas for projects, campaigns, and outreach, the United Way and the ANC are not accountable to them. Residents are not invited to sit on the United Way board, nor are they architects of the ANC governance structure. Indeed, where the ANC is accountable to residents, it is largely because the host agency, the Storefront, steers the project through its own commitment to inclusive practice.

*We've been able to look at it as a whole. This isn't a NAP thing. This isn't an ANC thing. This isn't a Storefront thing. This is a community thing and I haven't yet seen any other communities where they've been able to get as many people to get on board with that way of thinking as Kingston-Galloway has. (Interview 2)*

The resources that ANC brings to the community are widely valued. In combination with existing networks, the new funding offers the potential to bring organizing to a new level. However, the relationship has been difficult to navigate. The funding comes along with a set of prescriptions that limit the creativity and responsive organizing that has made KGO a vibrant community. This has particularly weighty implications for the well-established community group, Residents Rising. This group, which predates the ANC arrival in KGO, developed its structure, philosophy, and goals in a collective manner based on the skills and capacities of the founding group:

*Starting from a clean slate in any community is the right way to do it, because every community is so different. If you come in with a formula or you come in with a lot of academic learning, then it's not necessarily going to work depending on the players in the community and the needs. (Interview 9)*

Crediting the way that Residents Rising was able to develop on support from the Metcalf Foundation, which did not superimpose an agenda or "measurables" onto the grant, this community worker added:

*And because ANC, Action for Neighbourhood Change, hadn't already been in this neighbourhood, we were able to do a lot of really good groundwork for ANC now coming in the neighbourhood. ANC is still – the United Way is still – bound and determined to do things with their formula, but I think having really done a lot of the engagement work and the development work it's going to be a project that now ANC can go to a different level in this community than it has in other communities. (Interview 9)*

The impacts appear to be contradictory to the stated goals of the ANC and raise the question of whether it is possible to steer grassroots community development from above. Indeed, rather than asking what the community needed or how the entry of the ANC could be eased, the early days of ANC were consumed by a United Way-mandated "Vitality Survey." This was im-

posed even though the transitions that were taking place in the community as a result of the ANC entry were creating tensions between established groups and leaders within the community.

*In the beginning, there was tension and the transition wasn't planned well enough… And I think there wasn't enough communication… So who is going to do the work? All the information from Residents Rising wasn't passed on to [ANC], so I realized that, oh my god, things are not good… Try to explain what kind of complementary role with Residents Rising ANC has. You know, funding has finished, how do you continue that work? And this is where we invited ANC… for some people, do they understand trusteeship? Some people, do they understand United Way's, policies and procedures? Storefront's role in it… they don't have the background. (Interview 13)*

Community workers and residents have felt tensions when the United Way's commitment to promoting its own identity comes into conflict with groups that are trying to operate organically through collaborative partnerships. This contest between an open and sharing model of organizing and an ownership or branding approach was stark in the struggle over where to locate and how to mark the new ANC space:

*It was already… faith-based space that was used by Residents Rising and others. And United Way didn't mind doing work, building on Residents Rising's work, but they wanted a neutral space that can be marked as ANC space… They didn't want to be injected into someone else's space, they wanted their own space. They don't mind having others, but it's "our space." …. I*

*think that United Way is very big on branding and brand packaging. So that was a huge issue. But for us, it didn't matter, we needed a space. (Interview 13)*

This territoriality coupled with the lack of accountability in planning relationships is counterproductive to the goals of cultivating capacity and engagement. It seizes rather than supports residents' autonomy. Residents are encouraged to participate in projects, but are not involved in the overall design of the ANC.

*Toronto Community Housing Corporation: "They're hearing us, but they're not listening." (TCHC resident, focus group 3)*

The relationship between TCHC and its tenants' council is also somewhat fraught. The TCHC governance model encourages tenant leadership and even draws inspiration from a participatory budgeting initiative in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

On the one hand, TCHC has developed an institutional commitment to tenant leadership and empowerment, citing a desire to encourage tenant participation in planning and decision-making as well as advocacy and engagement in communities beyond TCHC (TCHC 2010a). Yet residents who serve as elected delegates on TCHC's tenants' council tell a different story about how the resident engagement strategy plays out on the ground. Tenant representatives shared frustrations that result from a planning process to which they contribute significant hours of unpaid and unrecognized labour often to have their community's concerns ignored or devalued by management.

The most celebrated process under the TCHC engagement model is the participa-

tory budgeting (PB) process. TCHC (2010b, 5) boasts that this is an opportunity for tenants "to decide how to spend $9 million in capital funds on priority repairs and changes to property. PB is about the tenants having a say in decisions that affect their community."

While the PB process initially appears as a process through which residents can take ownership over capital investment in their homes and communities, the actual amount of control is negligible compared to the overall TCHC budget. What is more, this $9 million is spread across all TCHC communities comprising more than 350 buildings. The voting process thus, is highly competitive.

In fact, tenants described the actual decision making process as more of a scramble where uneven skills levels of tenants are exacerbated in the distribution of resources. Tenant representatives are asked to come up with a proposal and develop a poster presentation, *"so the better presentation you might be lucky to get the money"* (TCHC focus group). Design skills and social networks often trump the tangible benefits to residents in the evaluation of projects. At the same time, we heard reports of staff intervening and imposing project proposals onto tenant representatives who felt that this management tactic was dishonest and conveyed a lack of trust in tenants' abilities to determine needs and develop project plans.

*The staff take pictures and then give it to the reps and say, "Okay, this is what you're going to ask for on that day," and some of the reps are upset…To me it felt like they were tricking us. (TCHC focus group)*

Whether a project proposal comes from tenants or staff, the latter are responsible for budgeting projects. If the project proposals come from staff, the budgeting is also developed by staff, who direct tenant representatives on how much money to request. Not only does staff typically determine the budget, but they may withhold information about where the work estimate comes from and how the costs break down:

*So I say to one of the staff, "Okay, when we went and asked for that money, didn't you get a quote in order for us to ask for that amount of money?" … She says, "Oh, we're still waiting on an estimate." Here we already went and asked for that money and they're saying no, we're still waiting on estimates. So somebody is tricking somebody somewhere. This is where sometimes I just say, "I'm wasting my time." (TCHC focus group)*

This lack of accountability continues after projects are approved and implemented in that tenants have no ability to oversee and ensure that projects for building improvements are completed effectively and on budget. There have been many observations of work being poorly done or incomplete, but concerns raised by tenant representatives feel they are routinely dismissed:

*The reps want to know who the contractors are, when the job's going to be started, when the job is going to start and when it's finished. (TCHC focus group)*

*They want us to do so many things and then they are not giving us full details. To me, you spending $60,000 and I was part of it, at least I would like to know what happened. (TCHC focus group)*

On top of the participatory budgeting process, tenant representatives also felt that they were wasting their time and energy in trying to bring feedback to the TCHC head office. One representative explained that she had been a part of the Residents' Advisory Council. This was a group made up of tenants from multiple buildings that would meet to discuss issues and concerns before bringing them to upper levels of TCHC management; however, that council has since disbanded due to lack of management responsiveness.

*Head office reached a point where they didn't want to hear from us any more, so that group kind of broke up. (TCHC focus group)*

Now the only accessible forum by which tenants can reach the main administrative offices is through a call centre, which residents report requires hours of idle time to hold the line until someone is available to listen and typically nothing gets done, *"They have something … called the call centre. Have you heard about that?... Well, it's a waste of time."* (TCHC focus group)

Although TCHC has made resident leadership a priority and has initiated tenant training and a social innovation fund to support tenant-led projects, there is still much work to be done to ensure that the labour that residents contribute to the governance process is recognized and respected.

The lack of transparency in participatory budgeting is particularly distressing, as it is promoted as a democratic and inclusive process. Tenants describe experiences of discrimination by TCHC staff who are said to treat them as incompetent. Tenants suggest that more support for their capacities is necessary, both implicitly and through the decision-making process, in order for them to effectively perform their duties as representatives and advocates of their buildings and communities:

*We just want housing staff to know that we the tenants, we live here, we know what's going on… [They] need to … care more about the tenants, because not everyone that lives in [social] housing is bad. (TCHC focus group)*

## 4.4 Diversity and Equality in Resident Engagement

Equity and diversity is another crucial area of planning where organizations vary dramatically in their practice. Many organizations, particularly the larger ones, adopt an implicit or explicit multiculturalist approach to their work. This may entail policies against discrimination based on gender, race, religion, and immigration status, for example.

Taken to its extreme, some frameworks may actively discourage or prohibit programs and services being directed to one subsection of the broader population (organized around a marker of group identity). The place-based focus of the PN model anticipates "place" or neighbourhood as the basis of social solidarity instead of rather than alongside other collective forms of solidarity (e.g., language group, ethnic or racial identity), and runs the risk of obfuscating the needs and experiences of the multiple "communities" that make up KGO.

While the intentions of this approach may well be fuelled by important commitments to equity, there are nevertheless some profound tensions in adopting these tenets in community development work in diverse communities. Criticism of a kind of

mandated "equal and inclusive" approach came from many groups within KGO; all of whom serve communities that are in some way marginalized by their collective experiences. Many informants expressed the dire need for groups to convene around and address the experiences of group specific violence, but also found that need stood in some tension with the place-based community organizing and funding structures in general.

One of the clearest examples of this stance came from the Tamil community. Many residents from this newcomer community reportedly experienced trauma in response to the state violence in Sri Lanka in 2009. This made it difficult for these residents to participate in events, because others could not understand or share in their pain. The gaps in empathy were not attributed to any inherent differences between people, but rather to a lack of awareness in KGO outside the Tamil community of what was occurring in Sri Lanka. Thus Tamil-oriented groups have organized internal support networks to help residents cope and process the trauma:

*We don't talk actively about what's happening, we only talk about the trauma… People are different, supporting the different sides. We try to just talk about the trauma to support one another. (Interview 5)*

Some members of the First Nations community also feel a need to organize around issues of common experience. Informants made reference to the ongoing experience of racism in the "mainstream" community in KGO and society at large. The desire to organize as indigenous people came out of lived social experience and not out of some notion that groups are essentially different. Informants from this community expressed the need for meeting space and other resources for indigenous groups and events, but also explained that they sometimes feel that they are received negatively in the wider community for making these claims. With all the emphasis on "place-based" community, some of those who organize on group-specific grounds feel they are seen as uncooperative, or even separatist.

Two things are worth highlighting here. First, "community" is not necessarily local or geographically discrete. As we discussed in chapter 3, meaningful experiences of community and identity may take radically different social and geographic form. In the case of the Tamil community, this may be a diasporic form with a complex set of local and global geographies that cannot be captured by fixed neighbourhood boundaries.

Second, multicultural models of community organizing tend to assume that conditions of equality between groups already exist. They even risk appearing as hostile towards group-specific community organizing with the assumption that identity-based politics or organizing is what actively creates group difference. Below, a service provider and a resident indicate some of the complexities and tensions between group-specific and community-wide organizing:

*Some people say well, you know, your club, it's 75% black, African-Canadian kids. So what are you telling me? I don't get it. They're the kids who live in the community, because that's the composition of Kingston Road-Galloway… Kids are kids. They need recreation; they need to have the services that we're offering. So for me the issue of*

*cultural and ethnic heritage is totally wrong. But at the same time, we recognize that there are some unique problems with respect to African-Canadian kids and their integration. (Interview 15)*

*The conditions that I think are necessary for people to create...inclusive environments? For example, we still have tensions within different groups and why certain people are pushing women's issues, certain people are coming up with Black issues, and certain people are talking South Asian issues. We still have tensions. And how do we eliminate that? Gender can be an issue at times. I don't have any easy answer. (Interview 13)*

There are certainly important reasons to support unified organizing across diverse communities, not least because identity is never static and people often have multiple overlapping identifications. However, the multiculturalist approach may deny the prior or ongoing experiences of violence or marginalization that make group-specific organizing meaningful and sometimes necessary.

This problem seems to manifest itself in the overarching UWGT plan for ANC sites to help build a common residents' association in each Priority Neighbourhood. This prescribed form for resident organizing – the residents' association – is a largely middle-class form of organizing and does not necessarily support the diversity of the community. Nevertheless, while the ANC structure promotes particular forms of organizing, the local management of ANC sites at the community level enables opportunities to exceed this model.

ANC staff people on the ground in KGO have been engaged in very important

work, for instance, in efforts to build relations and capacity specifically in the First Nations community. ANC staff efforts to support the planning for the annual Pow Wow, and to host regular outreach events in the Gabriel Dumont housing shows a different kind of engagement and different understanding of power and group relations.

Many of the participants in the focus groups highlighted experiences of racism in their everyday lives; in their access to medical care, in the surveillance they experience in shops in the neighbourhood, with police, with housing and employment discrimination and in encounters on the street.

(The issue of policing was beyond the scope of this pilot study, yet we heard numerous stories from residents over the course of this research about aggressive policing in the community. Residents were particularly concerned about the tactics used in policing young men of colour and TCHC tenants. We recommend that a thorough evaluation of targeted policing that draws on residents' experiences be undertaken immediately.)

Racism is often compounded by gender discrimination and the stigmatization of people with mental health issues, or of those living in poverty. All these forms of marginalization erect barriers to community-building and individual attempts to improve life opportunities. The following comments from women of colour who live in KGO speak to the subtle ways in which they experience marginalization in public services.

*I am going to a second doctor for examination for surgery. The nurse discusses me*

*with the doctor outside, saying "That is why the healthcare system is in such disarray," because I want a second opinion. (Resident, Focus Group 2)*

*It's hard for people of colour to access the mental health system. Some fall further through the cracks in spite of what is available within system. (Resident, Focus Group 2)*

Racism is a common experience for many residents of Toronto and KGO is no exception. It is experienced very differently by First Nations residents, South Asians, and African-Canadians, for instance. These experiences may encourage collectivity to form around a common experience and can create limits to organizing with others.

The effects of a more rigid multiculturalist approach to community organizing are thus twofold. On the one hand, groups that organize around a collective identity may be marginalized from larger and better-resourced agencies and processes. Typically ethnic or group-specific organizations are not as well-resourced and so cannot support robust efforts at member capacity-building. As a result, they have less participation and thus under-representation by people from marginalized groups in broader community organizing efforts. Some community members have identified a need for monthly community-wide dialogues on racism and equity in order to address power imbalances and the systemic nature of inequality.

The majority of organizations we consulted for this study express some form of commitment to equity in their operations and services. Nevertheless, groups operationalize those commitments quite differently. It was common to observe a more passive commitment to social justice, where, for instance, the organization will have policies against discrimination and may have posters on the wall that speak out against homophobia, sexism, or racism, but with little explicit attention to these issues in staff training, organizational governance, or service provision.

Nonetheless, a number of organizations take a more robust approach to issues of equity and diversity. These groups often make explicit connections between the service needs of their constituents and issues such as racism, ableism, or classism in broader society. Thus groups that took this kind of approach would often conceptualize anti-oppression and anti-racism as part of their core mandate. Practical actions within individual agencies vary widely, but organizations and community planning bodies would do well to consider adopting anti-racism strategies.

# 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The last three decades have seen rapid changes in the City's suburban social landscape. Toronto's inner suburbs were built in the period after the Second World War, and were designed largely for white, middle-class families who lived in single-family dwellings and travelled by car.

Changes over the past four decades in immigration policy, global and local labour and housing markets, the dismantling of social protections, the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric care, and the rising costs of living in the city's core are some of the factors that have contributed to higher concentrations of segregated and racialized poverty in the inner suburbs. Outmoded infrastructure and social service gaps have intensified through an investment focus on downtown revitalization and the concentration of resources in the core following amalgamation in 1998.

Together, these forces have collided to produce dramatically under-serviced neighbourhoods with large numbers of residents with low incomes, physical and mental health challenges, and greater numbers of newcomers, all with needs that are not well supported by the existing social infrastructure and physical landscape in the older suburbs.

The Priority Neighbourhood (PN) strategy was implemented in 2005 by the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT) in recognition of the alarming growth of segregated and racialized poverty, coupled with social service gaps, particularly in Toronto's inner suburbs. The PN designation has motivated the development of neighbourhood strategies led by both the city and the United Way, to respond to the problem of "suburban decline" through an explicit orientation toward strengthening services, neighbourhood capacity and resident engagement. PN designation has had a significant impact on funding, policy development, community planning, and resident engagement in the 13 targeted areas. With its focus on targeted social investment and participatory local governance, the PN strategy has profoundly influenced the city's social infrastructure since its initiation, and this influence is largely what spurred this research.

This report assesses the impact of PN designation on the cultivation of social infrastructure. It contrasts the experiences of the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) priority neighbourhood in Scarborough with those in the downtown west Parkdale community. Like KGO, Parkdale faces a range of challenges associated with concentrated poverty, mental health, and racism, but is experiencing rapid gentrification, rather than "decline" and does not have priority designation. This report identifies practices and policies that contribute to resilient social infrastructure and those that hinder its development. Social infrastructure is cultivated through resources and relationships at the local level, such as spaces for gathering, social services and programs, opportunities for learning, as well as partnerships and networks within and beyond the community level. Social infrastructure

exists at the local scale, but relies on public policy, capital investment, and social networks that are not locally contained.

As an equalization measure to help address and alleviate the decades of underfunding and neglect in particular areas, the PN strategy has made important progress. The new and much-needed funding opportunities have enabled local agencies in KGO to overcome the chronic barriers posed by lack of resources, to make enormous gains in building responsive programs and services. The ability to support existing and new initiatives through staff time, honoraria, and accessibility supports has helped strengthen individual organizations while also contributing to community-wide planning. The integration of services at the city level, along with community agency and resident participation in the Neighbourhood Action Partnership, holds great potential for effective collaborative planning. From a service-delivery perspective, the PN strategy has seen many successes that can be built upon to ensure viable sustainability of newly flourishing initiatives.

The need for integrated service delivery and new funding to respond to changing populations, lifestyles and degraded infrastructure is an immensely important motivation for the PN strategy. However, another rationale for targeted investment – the "neighbourhood effects" framework – has much more troubling impacts. "Neighbourhood effects" research suggests that high-poverty neighbourhoods incubate social problems and that living in such a neighbourhood results in an array of social ills and isolation from mainstream societal norms.

Although much of this research is widely disputed and full of methodological limitations, the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force and the United Way have used "neighbourhood effects" arguments to justify the PN emphasis on resident engagement and social capital. The "neighbourhood effects" rationale poses a slew of problems that may debilitate social infrastructure and community building rather than support it, as intended. These arguments focus attention exclusively on poor communities, with the flawed assumption that poverty can be solved entirely where it is manifest.

We have argued that the neighbourhood focus has clear limitations. A narrow focus on the neighbourhood as the only scale of intervention for poverty alleviation runs the risk of obscuring and indeed aggravating the very causes of poverty that exist at broader scales. In short, the solutions that have been implemented do not address the problems of poverty and social inequality. While the neighbourhood strategy has improved services and collaborative community planning, there has been no concerted focus on developing strategies for poverty reduction. Rather, in a sleight-of-hand, some PN strategies emphasize resident engagement as the solution to the problems facing the targeted neighbourhoods.

The most damaging consequence of focusing on neighbourhoods as an isolated approach is that it devolves the responsibility for poverty onto the communities and individuals who experience it. This approach runs the risk of draining the capacity of residents and local staff who take up this labour, while also contributing to the reproduction of stigma and discrimination by virtue of living in a Priority Neighbourhood. When "civic engagement"

itself is the prescription, residents are subjected to ever-increasing demands on their time and energy.

In KGO, the strong pre-existing base and growing numbers of active residents report high levels of participation in local initiatives and events. Although residents are often called upon to provide ideas, outreach, and volunteer work, they are rarely given the opportunity to take leadership over the design and development of PN initiatives. The lack of transparency and accountancy in the design, governance framework, and decision-making process of some of the PN initiatives and organizations has resulted in programs that intend to be "resident-led," but in which residents have not been the architects of the structure and process. This form of engagement runs of the risk of exploiting resident labour through an endless cycle of volunteerism. In turn, residents report feeling disempowered when their skills and efforts do not bring about recognition, respect, or change.

As well. targeted investment in bounded territories does not merely respond to existing neighbourhoods, but creates them by erecting boundaries that rarely correspond with the everyday lives and social networks of residents. As a result, many residents and agencies both inside and outside the PNs experience these boundaries as arbitrary geographical limits to the work that they are able to do or the programs they are able to access.

On the other hand, this report documents many creative attempts to facilitate resident leadership and collective empowerment. Organizations that focus on equity and access have demonstrated commitment to investing in residents. The recognition and sharing of local skills, transparent governance practices, ongoing training, and opportunities to connect with networks and groups both within and beyond the community are a few positive means of supporting resident leadership.

Similarly, serious attempts to overcome racism, discrimination and poverty are important components to effective resident engagement. Strategies may include anti-oppression training, the provision of technological support, mentoring, food, and transportation, as well as accessibility regarding the timing and format of events and meetings. In KGO there is widespread commitment to a community-wide model of engagement that supports residents in enacting change in their community.

The recommendations below aim to support the important work under way in KGO and other neighbourhoods in the city. They highlight the need to better support neighbourhood planning initiatives, to improve resident engagement initiatives and to address systemic issues such as poverty and racism more directly, and finally, to make funding more supportive and responsive to communities.

### 1. *Increase infrastructure investment.*
Investing in the social and physical infrastructure of under-resourced communities is critically important and could be enhanced if the recommendations below are addressed.

## 2. *Support neighbourhood planning.*

The NAP holds enormous potential for coordinated community planning in Toronto's communities, and is already a source of cooperation and innovation in KGO. We have witnessed many successes through the NAP in bringing together city departments, community agencies, and residents to develop local planning initiatives in collaboration rather than competition. However, concerns were raised over the lack of structured support and resources for NAP activities at the city level and a governance structure that appears inaccessible to residents.

The NAP functions well in KGO largely as a result of the enormous time, energy, and resources devoted to the partnership by local agencies. Without this unpaid and unrecognized work, the NAP would not operate with such success. Concerns have also been raised that the partnership benefits larger agencies and city staff, while residents and smaller groups without time or resources to invest in the partnership are left out of the decision-making processes.

i.   The City should fund the NAP more adequately so that costs are not borne disproportionately by community agencies. This would also support more equitable participation across groups with highly diverse access to resources.
ii.  The City's community development officer should be allocated office space within the community. This would make the NAP a more accessible and community-based partnership and would alleviate work that is currently offloaded onto community organizations.
iii. City departments need to prioritize the work of the NAP in their own operations and ensure that this is reflected in the dedication of staff time across multiple departments to the local activities of the partnership.
iv.  A resident caucus of the NAP should be developed and supported to ensure autonomous and supportive space for community members to develop a voice on local governance issues.
v.   A NAP network should be cultivated in all city neighbourhoods, regardless of PN designation.

## 3. *Create social infrastructure that supports resident leadership.*

While there is unanimous support for resident engagement in local community development work, some models of engagement risk exploiting residents' time and draining their capacities.

i.   Neighbourhood organizations and funding agencies that are active in the community should develop clear lines of accountability to the community and direct mechanisms for feedback from the community.
ii.  Organizations and funding agencies must ensure that residents have opportunities for meaningful participation in all policy and program design affecting their neighbourhood. Effective resident engagement must entail support for leadership and skills development.

iii. Neighbourhood organizations and funding agencies should cultivate diverse participation in community and organizational governance. The provision of training, mentorship, payment (if warranted), access to childcare, communications technology (e.g. for receiving meeting minutes), and opportunities for skill sharing, is key to supporting diverse participation.

iv. Long meetings with formal agendas are often necessary, but are not always conducive to resident engagement. Many organizations are already fostering diverse opportunities for participation; these should continue to be explored and enhanced.

### 4. *Address the complexities and persistence of racism.*

Residents report persistent discrimination as a major barrier in their lives, particularly on the grounds of race, but also according to mental health status, gender, and income level. Although most agencies in the community and many individuals subscribe to values of inclusion and equity, a lack of direct commitments to anti-racist and anti-oppressive frameworks for community development may obscure the multiple forms of discrimination faced in variant ways by different groups.

i. Develop strategies to address the persistent experiences of racism in the city and the local community. Careful attention to the specific experiences and perceptions of diverse groups, for instance, the First Nations community, would encourage more equitable and inclusive community development processes and outcomes.

ii. Create opportunities for staff, volunteers, and members of the community to participate in anti-oppression training and learning opportunities.

iii. Extend support for group-specific organizing to address the particular needs and experiences of various groups within the wider community.

### 5. *Make funding flexible and sustainable.*

Sustainable and flexible funding for social services and programs is crucial for local agencies' work in building social infrastructure. Reliance on program funding prevents many successful initiatives from continuing once short-term funds dry up. Likewise, the strict criteria attached to most funding often hinders the creativity of smaller organizations, which may not have the staff support or organizational status in place to qualify for or administer standard grants.

i. Community development cannot take a cookie-cutter approach. Funding agencies must respond to the distinct needs, desires, designs and pace of communities.

ii. Funding agencies should allow applicants to develop their own goals and frameworks of evaluation. Funding that does not rely on accountancy models or strict organizational criteria is much more effective at supporting grassroots and resident-led initiatives.

iii. Create core funding opportunities for agencies. This is ultimately the most important element to enable organizations to plan and deliver effective, stable, and sustainable programs.

### 6. *Align the solution with the problem.*

Although the PN strategy was developed in response to high levels of concentrated poverty, the initiative is not directly geared towards combating poverty. Although all three levels of government support the PN framework financially, there has been no tripartite action to develop policies that could reduce poverty. There has also been little support for coordinated campaigns across the PNs to develop coalitions around shared issues, such as housing, transit or ODSP benefit cuts.

i.   Institute poverty reduction as a key aim for the PN framework and develop tangible poverty reduction and economic development goals and benchmarks.
ii.  Coordinate anti-poverty initiatives through the ANC across PN sites. This does not mean imposing an agenda on residents or communities, but rather foregrounding systemic issues across neighbourhood borders even as community specific projects are developed.
iii. Convene an action committee with representation from all three levels of government, the non-profit sector, community and residents' organizations, and funding agencies to create meaningful action on concentrated poverty. Poor neighbourhoods in Toronto's inner suburbs are a feature of metropolitan-wide patterns of social polarization, spatial segregation, and the racialization of poverty. These patterns stem from political and economic shifts at multiple scales including the de-industrialization of the economy, the rise of precarious work and the dismantling of social protections, the growing problem of housing affordability, limited access to transportation, and racism in local labour and housing markets. Thus, to address the causes of concentrated neighbourhood poverty and align the solution with the problem, action must take place well beyond the neighbourhood scale.

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# APPENDIX 1.   LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

· Iain Duncan, Action for Neighbourhood Change (Kingston-Galloway / Orton Park)
· Nadine Peazer, Always Nubian, Always Scarborough Association (A.N.A.S.A)
· Chris Brillinger, Director, Community Resources, City of Toronto
· Ron Rock, Executive Director, East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club (ESBGT)
· Tony Jno Baptiste, Manager, Youth and Outreach Services, ESBGT
· Anne Gloger, director, East Scarborough Storefront
· Jody MacDonald, Gabrielle Dumont Non Profit Homes
· Wayne Robinson, Kingston-Galloway/ Orton Park Neighbourhood Action Partnership
· Collette Murphy, Community Program Director, Metcalf Foundation
· Michelle Meawasige, Native Child and Family Service
· Victor Willis, Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC)
· Cassandra Wong, Parkdale Community Information Centre
· Bridget Vianna, Parkdale/Liberty Economic Development Corporation
· Dirk Townsend, Parkdale Residents Association
· Lori Metcalfe, Residents Rising Community Association
· Israt Ahmed, Residents Rising Community Association, Scarborough Anti Poverty Coalition
· Anne-Marie Gardner, The Redwood (Women's and children's shelter)
· Siva Sivagurunathan, Sangamum (Tamil mental health support group)
· Rick Eagan, Community Development Coordinator, St. Christopher House
· Rick Edwards, St. Michael's Hospital
· Tenants Council, Toronto Community Housing Corporation
· Sheila McGregor, Toronto Community Housing Corporation
· Susan MacDonell, United Way of Greater Toronto
· Paravathy Kanthasamy, Vasantham (Tamil Seniors Wellness Centre)
· Diane Edwards, West Hill Community Services
· Danavan Samuels, Youth Challenge Fund

# APPENDIX 2.  RESEARCH GUIDE
# (KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS)

**1. Background**
- How long have you been in your current position?
- How did you get involved?
- What is your role here?
- How would you describe the role of your agency within this community? (programs, activities, services, etc.)
- In relation to the city?
- Has this changed over time?
- How would you describe social infrastructure? Would you say your organization fits into this framework?

**2. Client base/ service area**
- What populations do you serve? Or who would you say makes up the participating groups in your organization?
- Are there any groups that you would like to include more of but have been unable?
- If so, what would you say the barriers are to greater participation of this/these group(s)?

**3. Community development**
- Would you say your organization is intentionally focused on community building? How so?
- What sorts of programs do you undertake that are geared towards or encompass community building?
- How is program development conducted? Who decides what projects to develop and through what practices?
- How would you describe the leadership (organizational) structure of you agency?
- How does your organization reach out to residents?
- What is the proportion of paid staff to volunteer participation in community building programs?
- What avenues of involvement are available for residents?
- What roles do residents typically take? Leadership?
- How long do most residents participate actively in said programs? Turnover rate?
- How would you account for this? i.e., success at long range retention or rapid turnover
- What are some successes you've experienced in resident or community organizing? (impacts, process, practice)
- What have been some of the struggles you've faced in mobilizing community building activities?

**4. Partnerships**
- Are there other local organizations that you work with?
- What forms of partnerships or collaborations have you seen across groups providing similar services or programs?
- How would you describe the communication between various groups in the community?

**5. Funding and governance**
- From which organizations does your group receive funding? -or- Does your group receive external funding?
- How would you describe the composition of your funding? i.e. core, special project, etc.
- How does the availability or lack of availability of funding in your organization impact daily and long-term activities? (planning, resident engagement, etc.)
- How would you suggest that these stresses could be ameliorated?
- What changes in funding sources or requirements have you seen over time?
- What changes have you noticed in Parkdale since the inception of "Priority neighbourhoods" in other areas of the city?
- Would you say that city policy is a conscious consideration in the day to day operation of your organization? In relation to community engagement?
- How do residents fit into this framework?
- How would you describe the relationship of your organization to municipal policy (provincial, federal, supranational)?

**6. Future challenges and opportunities**
- What goals do you have for changes or improvements in your organization?
- What challenges or advantages do you foresee?
- Are there any changes in policy, funding or community relationships that you see as vital to the success of your organization's goals?
- What policy and program changes could be made to strengthen social infrastructure?

# APPENDIX 3. FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

Thank you for joining us for this focus group on Building Social Infrastructure in South East Scarborough**.** Today's focus group is part of a research project I am conducting at the University of Toronto in partnership with the East Scarborough Storefront. The goal of the project is to learn more about the creative community building that is underway in this community, what makes it possible, and what barriers exist for residents and other groups involved in this work. We are particularly interested in the important role that residents play in making their communities a better place to live.

Today, we are conducting focus groups in order to hear from you: the residents who are involved in so much of this work. We want to learn from your perspectives and experiences about:

- What makes your community strong.
- What kinds of projects you are involved in in the community (ie. community garden, youth arts, community market, Amazing place, etc).
- What kinds of roles you play in these projects.
- What opportunities you have for leadership in the community.
- What challenges you experience in doing this work (ie- time, childcare, transportation, language barriers, skills, comfort levels, etc).
- The specific kinds of support that makes your participation in the community possible.
- What the most pressing issues are for Kingston-Galloway / Orton Park, and;
- What strengths and opportunities you see in the community for making positive change.

For the next 45 minutes, we will break out into smaller discussion groups. Each group will have a facilitator who will ask you some questions. The facilitator will write down the comments we make, but they will not write down your name, so all statements you make will be completely anonymous. For example, if you tell us about your experience with the festival market, we will only write down the information about the market and not about you.

If at any point you want to leave the focus group, you are welcome to do so. There is no penalty for leaving, and if you decide to leave we will not use any of the information you shared with the group today.

I want to stress that there are no right or wrong answers. There is no rush, you can take as much time to answer questions as you like. I also want to encourage all of you to participate in whatever way you feel comfortable. If you wish not to respond to the question, you do not have to. The facilitator will ask a question and allow time for anyone who wishes to respond to the question to do so, or you can discuss the question as a group.

You do not need to raise your hand, but please be courteous and allow others to finish their comments before you begin. And if you are unclear about any of the questions that the facilitator asks, please feel free to ask him or her to repeat or rephrase the question.

After the break out groups we will gather together again as a big group and hear back from the smaller groups. We will then have lunch.
Are there any questions about how this discussion will work or how this information will be used?
Break out into groups with appropriate language support (ie- facilitators will have skills in particular languages to support residents). Introductions within break-out groups.

Group discussion questions:

1.  What does a strong community look like? What makes *your* community strong?
2.  What kinds of projects you are involved in in the community (ie. community garden, youth arts, community market, Amazing place, etc).
3.  How do these kinds of projects and groups make the community a better place?
4.  What kinds of roles you play in these projects? How are you involved? How much time do you put in (in a week, in a month, in a year)?
5.  What opportunities you have for leadership in the community?
6.  What challenges do you experience in doing this work? What makes it hard for you to do the work you are doing, or to get involved in other projects? (ie- time, child-care, transportation, language barriers, skills, comfort levels, etc).
7.  What specific kinds of support makes your participation in the community possible?
8.  What are the most pressing issues are for Kingston-Galloway / Orton Park?
9.  What are the problems or challenges facing the community?
10. What strengths and opportunities you see in the community for making positive change.

Closing
Thank you very much for sharing your time and your insights with us today. That was very interesting. We will compile this information with that of the other groups to help make a report. We will make sure that a summary of this report is made available to anyone who is interested in receiving it. Please add your name and contact information to this list if you want to receive a copy. We will also provide the Storefront with copies for the community. Thank you again for coming.