



House to House

SPECIAL EDITION ON NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE IN WEST-CENTRAL TORONTO • FALL 2005

Your neighbourhood: how it's changing

What comes to your mind when you hear the word "neighbourhood"? Do you think of your street, or the cluster of streets around where you live, your nearest shopping area, the area served by the local school?

Can you find the services and friendship you need in your neighbourhood? Some neighbourhoods make people feel at home; others may make them feel isolated. Do you feel like you belong to a community when you think of your neighbourhood?

Urban researchers are starting to study neighbourhoods as the building blocks of city life. There is a lot of interest in understanding better how neighbourhoods age and change over time.

For example, some neighbourhoods have many seniors who become frail and leave their homes which are then taken by families with children. Recently in our area, some streets had fewer than 20 children going door to door on Hallowe'en while other streets had over 250 "trick or treaters." Thirty years ago, it may well have been the opposite situation on these streets.

Other changes in neighbourhoods may be due to economic reasons or government policies (e.g. immigration). A downtown area with affordable housing attracts artists and young professionals. Increased popularity results in rising costs. A neighbourhood that once housed people from a particular ethnic group may become the centre of a completely different ethnic population. One thing that these changes have in common is that they involve displacement of one group of people by another.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT OUR OWN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Right now, a research project is under way on the neighbourhoods that make up the large area served by St. Christopher House. About 110,000 people live in those eight neighbour-



Local neighbourhood change includes new condos built on old industrial lands (like the photo above) as well as new residents moving into older housing on the residential streets.

St. Christopher House and the University of Toronto, and it involves resident associations, community agencies, academics, government departments, local businesses and, we hope, you. If you are a resident of one of the eight neighbourhoods, we want you to participate. This newslet-

ter will introduce you to some of the work done so far.

THE STORY SO FAR

Over the past six months, researchers have gathered information about the people, businesses, organizations, and services in each neighbourhood.

The researchers have collected data from the census, focusing on the most recent decades: 1971 to 2001. (The census is conducted every 5 years and the next one will be in 2006.)

The census data indicates that the eight neighbourhoods are changing in many ways. For example, the area as a whole had 20,000 fewer people in 2001 than it did in 1971, but the number of jobs has increased by 2,100.

The research also includes a profile of the area's housing stock, as well as an inventory of its businesses, community organizations, and informal social groups. We will be looking at data on local school enrollments, crime and travel and transportation in the area.

CAN WE CONTROL NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE?

Is it possible to promote changes for the better and control changes for the worse? And if so, how? Those are two of the questions the researchers want

Get involved in change!

THE NEXT PHASE of the research requires active community input. We will be holding public meetings (see below) at which residents can comment on the research so far and discuss ways to deal with local changes and displacement.

What would you like to preserve about your neighbourhood? What is improving because of the changes and what needs to be improved? What role can St. Christopher House play? What more research needs to be done? We invite you to get involved in our work and let us know your ideas. Visit our website (www.stchristhouse.org) or call Rick Eagan at 416-532-4828 x238.

PUBLIC MEETING, FEB. 7, 2006

Public meeting about the Neighbourhood Change project: Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2006, 6:30 pm at 248 Ossington Avenue.

COMMUNITY FORUM, MAY 8 OR 9, 2006

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHANGE: BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES FROM WITHIN
A CASE STUDY OF TORONTO'S WEST-CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOODS

This participatory research and community development project is led by St. Christopher House and the Centre for Urban and Community Studies at the University of Toronto with a wide range of research and community partners. Beginning in 2005, this project is funded by the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. For more information, maps and research reports connected to the Neighbourhood Change project, please visit www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/cura.

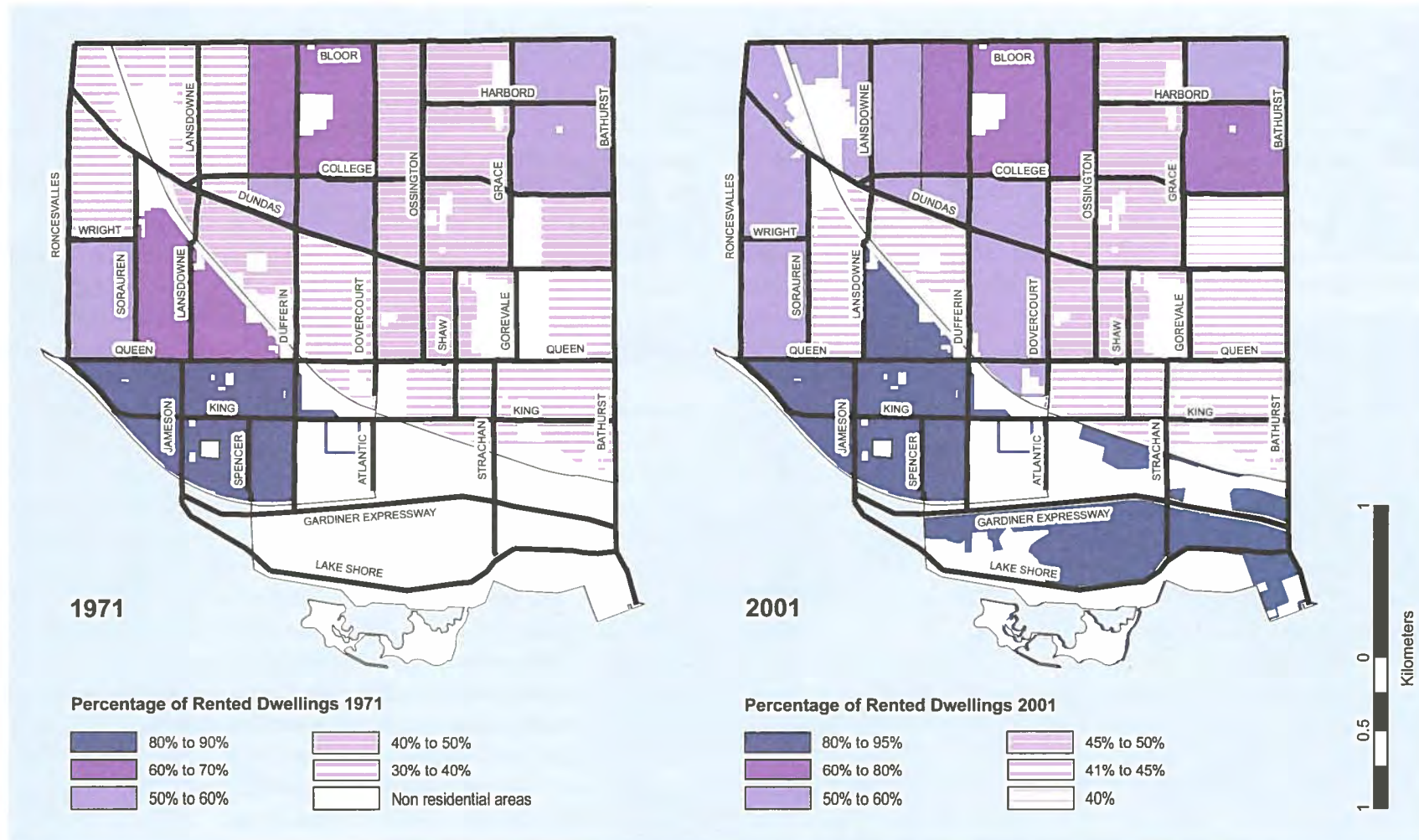
ST. CHRIS VISION STATEMENT

St. Christopher House is a neighbourhood-based, multi-service agency in the west end of downtown Toronto. We are a team of volunteers, participants and staff who develop community programs and services in response to need and also promote socio-economic conditions in which individuals and families in our catchment area can thrive.

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Christopher House has as its central purpose the enabling of less-advantaged individuals, families and groups in the community to gain greater control over their lives and their

Home ownership and rentals, ups and downs



THESE MAPS SHOW the local neighbourhoods that have a high proportion of rented housing compared to the city. Overall, the stock of rented housing has increased by 10 per

cent between 1971 and 2001. At the same time, other parts of the city have lost rental accommodation. However, within the local area the changes are not evenly spread around. Rental housing

has increased in some areas and dropped by almost 15 per cent in areas such as Roncesvalles, west of Lansdowne. Rented apartments and houses tend to be home to many single people,

seniors, students, and those on low incomes. Rental housing in this area, which is close to so many jobs and services, is therefore a very important part of the housing stock. •

MORE ABOUT THESE MAPS

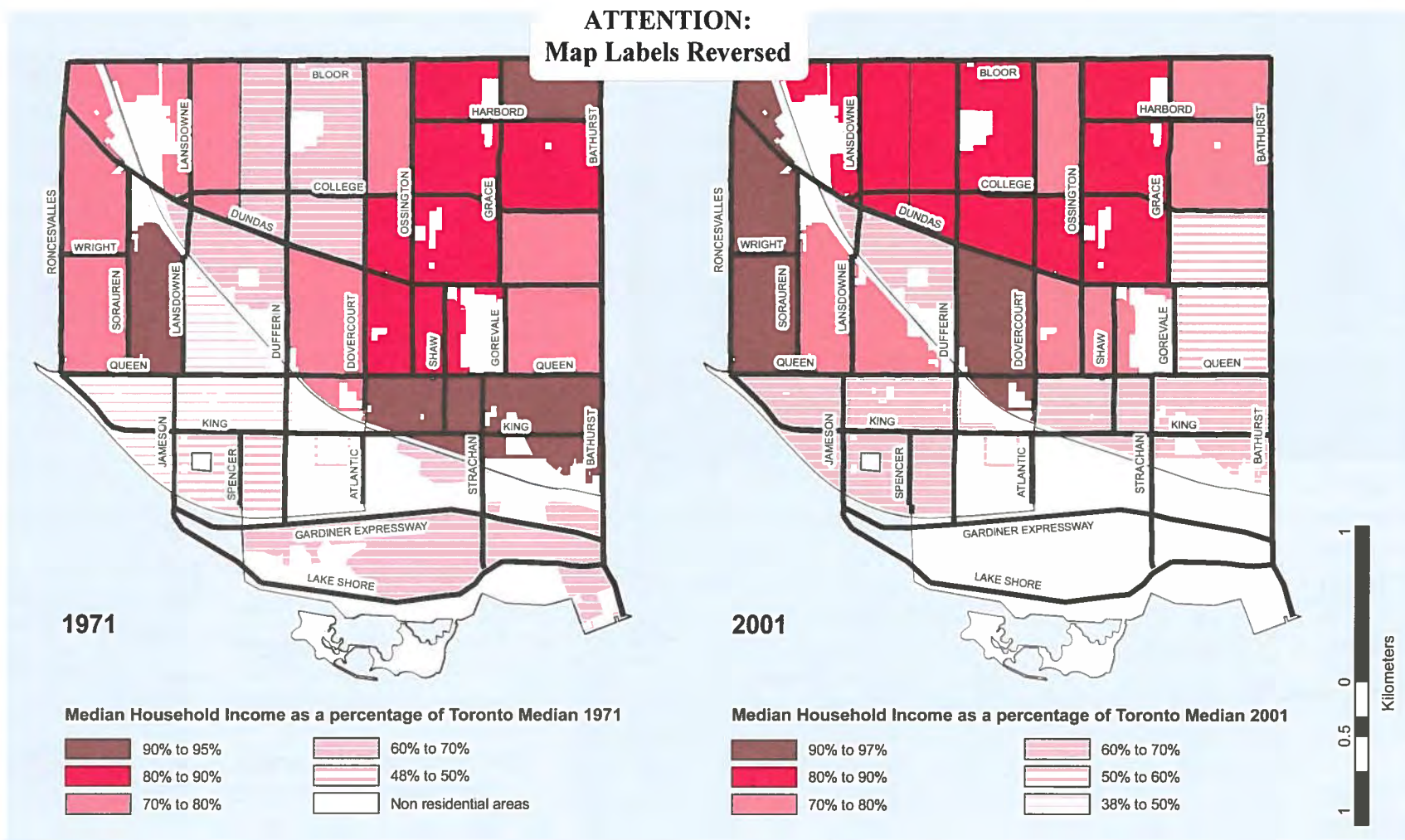
These maps and other features of neighbourhood change can be viewed on the CURA project website at: www.urbancentre.toronto.ca/cura. (In the centre column, under "Contents," click on "Data Maps.")

In addition to the maps displayed on these two pages, there are maps on change in the number and pattern of one-person households, the number of people who have moved out of or into the neighbourhood, place of birth, recent immigrants, occupations, housing values, rent levels, and locations of apartments.

JOIN ST. CHRIS AS A MEMBER!

We welcome you to join as a member of St. Christopher House. You get voting privileges at our Annual General Meeting, an annual fall House to House newsletter and spring Annual Report. Our membership fee is sliding scale from \$5 to \$15 a year. Contact Jennifer Woodill at (416) 532-4828 x 105 for membership information or for information about volunteering at St. Chris.

West-central incomes are low for Toronto



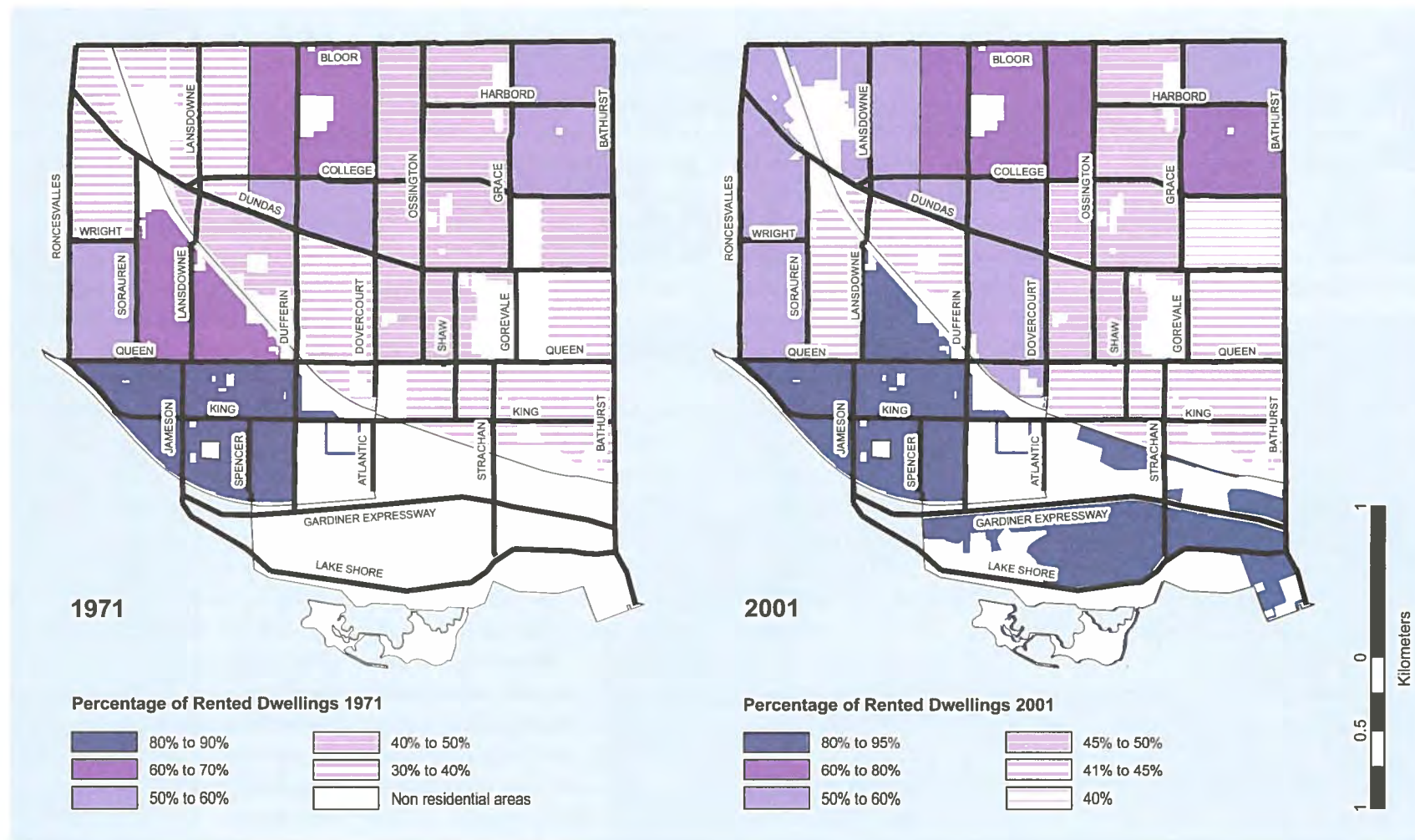
THESE MAPS SHOW changes in the income of people in our area compared to people across the whole city.

of the households having lower income. The shading on the map compares the median household income for the area to the

local median income is below that of the city. However, some neighbourhoods have higher household income in 2001 than

Road, and has fallen for those on the west side of the area. Rising incomes may indicate "gentrification," a process in which low-

Home ownership and rentals, ups and downs



THESE MAPS SHOW the local neighbourhoods that have a high proportion of rented housing compared to the city. Overall, the stock of rented housing has increased by 10 per

cent between 1971 and 2001. At the same time, other parts of the city have lost rental accommodation. However, within the local area the changes are not evenly spread around. Rental housing

has increased in some areas and dropped by almost 15 per cent in areas such as Roncesvalles, west of Lansdowne. Rented apartments and houses tend to be home to many single people,

seniors, students, and those on low incomes. Rental housing in this area, which is close to so many jobs and services, is therefore a very important part of the housing stock. •

MORE ABOUT THESE MAPS

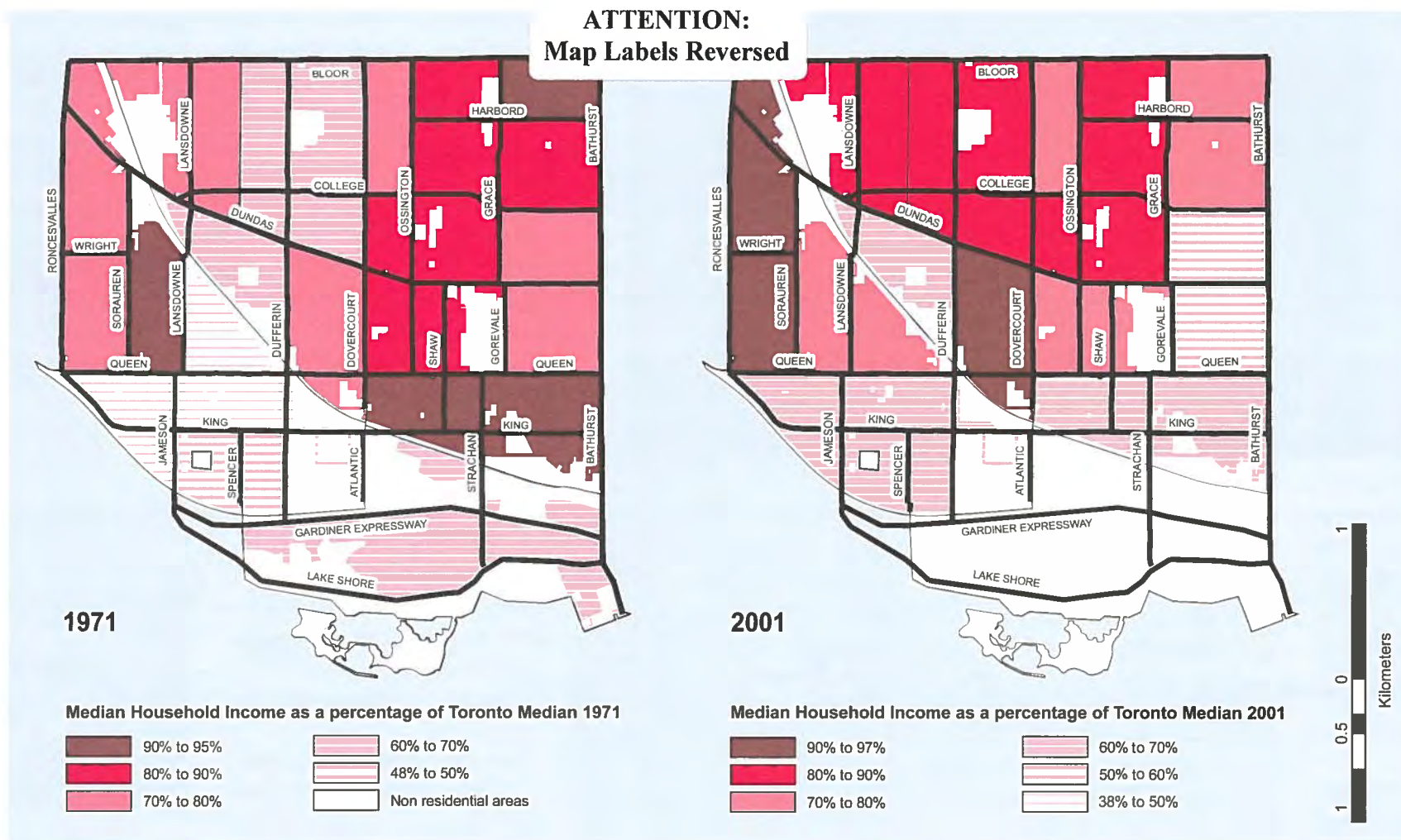
These maps and other features of neighbourhood change can be viewed on the CURA project website at: www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/cura. (In the centre column, under "Contents," click on "Data Maps.")

In addition to the maps displayed on these two pages, there are maps on change in the number and pattern of one-person households, the number of people who have moved out of or into the neighbourhood, place of birth, recent immigrants, occupations, housing values, rent levels, and locations of apartments.

JOIN ST. CHRIS AS A MEMBER!

We welcome you to join as a member of St. Christopher House. You get voting privileges at our Annual General Meeting, an annual fall House to House newsletter and spring Annual Report. Our membership fee is sliding scale from \$5 to \$15 a year. Contact Jennifer Woodill at (416) 532-4828 x 105 for membership information or for information about volunteering at St. Chris.

West-central incomes are low for Toronto



THESE MAPS SHOW changes in the income of people in our area compared to people across the whole city.

of the households having lower income. The shading on the map compares the median household income for the area to the

local median income is below that of the city. However, some neighbourhoods have higher household income in 2001 than

Road, and has fallen for those on the west side of the area. Rising incomes may indicate "gentrification," a process in which low-

COMMUNITY SWEEP 2005:

Residents like convenience and neighbours

NOW IS THE TIME TO GIVE TO THE ST. CHRIS COMMUNITY ENDOWMENT

Please consider donating to the St. Christopher House Community Endowment, which helps fund St. Chris's community development work. We are building an asset base that will generate interest annually to fund our social policy development, advocacy efforts and community-building. This work is essential to our mission.

Until Dec. 31, 2005, your contribution to the Community Endowment will be matched up to \$1 million by a long-time supporter, Stan Meek, in memory of his wife Brenda, a social worker and former staff of St. Chris. Pledges for contributions will also be matched as long as the final instalment is received by Dec. 31, 2006.

To find out how you can contribute to the Community Endowment, please call Nelson Lynch, Resource Development Coordinator, at (416) 504-3535 x226 or email him at nelsonly@stchrishouse.org.

Every year, St. Chris conducts a Community Sweep when multilingual teams of volunteers and staff speak with local residents in their homes or in local parks and streets. The goal of these conversations is for St. Chris to identify residents' needs and concerns and to build relations with diverse people in this community.

This year, we asked 225 residents about their perceptions of the changes occurring within their neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood Characteristics

Most people provided more than one response to the question, "What do you like about the neighbourhood?" Overwhelmingly, the most common response was convenience/access to amenities. The second most common response was having good neighbours and a sense of community. Four people said that they did not like

anything, or did not like much about their neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood Concerns

Most people also provided more than one response when questioned about the main concerns in the neighbourhood. The most common concern was criminal activity, which included drugs, prostitution, and public drinking. This was followed by parking or traffic issues and concerns about other people in the neighbourhood such as groups of youth who appeared to have nothing to do. About 21 per cent of respondents said they had no concerns about their neighbourhood.

Resident Participation in Neighbourhood Activities

When asked about their participation in neighbourhood activities, the most common response was that they socialized with neighbours. The second most common response was

that they used local resources such as community centres or schools as well as local stores and businesses. Interestingly, the next most common response was nothing; these residents did not interact with others in their neighbourhood. Other activities included participation in church events or activities with their children and family.

Neighbourhood Changes

The next series of questions asked residents if they have noticed any changes in the neighbourhood over the past few years. Of the 155 responses to this question, the most common things people perceived were that the area has become more multicultural, with more families, more homeowners, and a decrease in the elderly population. However, 23 per cent of the respondents did not notice any neighbourhood changes.

Of the 76 residents who indicated that they did notice neighbourhood changes, 40 said they were happy with the changes, whereas 20 said they were not happy with the changes. The rest indicated that they had mixed feelings about the changes, or did not care.

"Having a Say" in Neighbourhood Changes

Most people had no response to the question, "Do you have any say in the neighbourhood changes?" However, of the 80 people who did respond to this question, 51 said they

felt they have no say in neighbourhood changes, and 24 said they do have a say in the neighbourhood changes to some extent.

Role of St. Christopher House

When asked what they would like to see St. Christopher House do to improve the neighbourhood, 65 people suggested more community programs for youth, seniors, or homeless people. Others suggested more advocacy for affordable housing, parking improvements, solutions to traffic issues, a community clean-up, increasing community policing and maintaining the diversity of the neighbourhood. Several people suggested that St. Chris raise its profile within the community by producing a newsletter or improving communication with the local neighbourhood.

Consulting with Our Community

The sample gathered from the Community Sweep constituted only a small portion of the 107,000 people who live in the St. Chris catchment area. Still, the Community Sweep did provide ideas for future community-based research on neighbourhood change.

St. Christopher House thanks all the residents who took the time to provide insight into the changing dynamics of these unique neighbourhoods. We want to hear more from residents about their interests and concerns. If you would like to be involved in future community-based research with St. Christopher House, please look at our website: www.stchrishouse.org or contact Rick Eagan at (416) 532-4828, x238. •



Long-time St. Chris member Tim Simpson is helping us document how our neighbourhoods look now so we can see how they are changing.



St. Christopher
House

588 Queen Street West, Toronto, ON M6J 1E3

