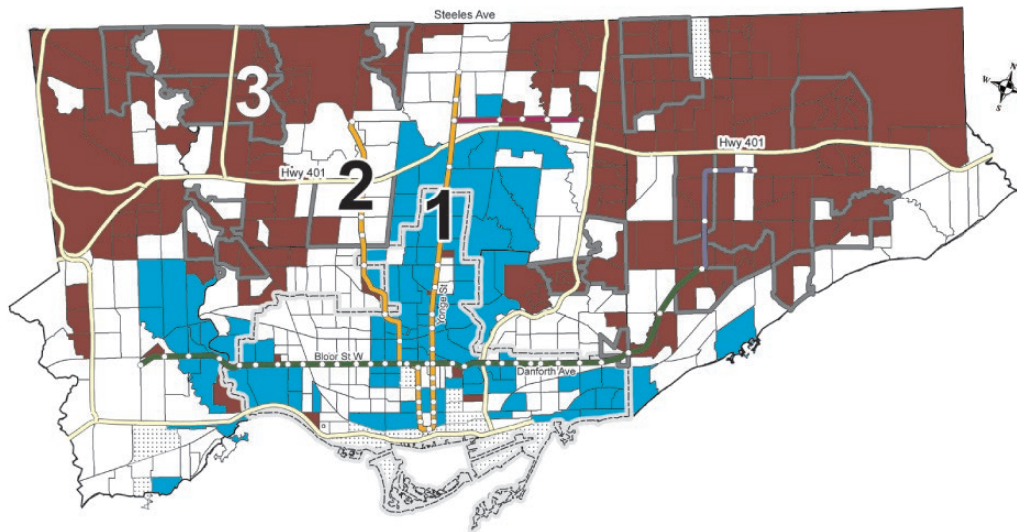# TORONTO'S INNER SUBURBS

Investing in Social Infrastructure in Scarborough

BY DEBORAH COWEN & VANESSA PARLETTE, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

MAP 1: CHANGE IN AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL INCOME, CITY OF TORONTO, RELATIVE TO THE TORONTO CMA, 1970-2005

Average individual income from all sources, 15 years and over, census tracts

Change in the Census Tract Average Individual Income as a Percentage of the Toronto CMA Average, 1970-2005

City #1
Increase of 20% or More
100 Census Tracts, 20% of City

City #2
Increase or Decrease
is Less than 20%
208 Census Tracts, 40% of City

City #3
Decrease of 20% or More
206 Census Tracts, 40% of City

TORONTO'S INNER SUBURBS: INVESTING IN SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN SCARBOROUGH

By Deborah Cowen and Vanessa Parlette

June 2011

Deborah Cowen is a professor in the University of Toronto's Department of Geography and Programme in Planning. Vanessa Parlette is a doctoral candidate in geography at the University of Toronto. Both have been active in community projects in Kingston Galloway/Orton Park for the past five years.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

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Canada

TORONTO'S INNER SUBURBS

Investing in Social Infrastructure in Scarborough

WHY PRIORITY NEIGHBOURHOODS?

Toronto's inner suburbs were largely built after the Second World War. They were designed mostly for white, middle-class families who lived in single-family dwellings and travelled by car.

Changes in immigration policy and in labour and housing markets, the dismantling of the social welfare safety net, the closing of psychiatric institutions, and the rising costs of living in the city's core have all affected the inner suburbs. These areas today are home to many poor households, including members of many racialized groups. At the same time, social services in the inner suburbs are few and far between.

The result: dramatically under-serviced inner suburban neighbourhoods characterized by large numbers of residents with low incomes, many of whom face physical and mental health challenges, as well as greater numbers of newcomers.

In 2005, the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto put in place a Priority Neighbourhood strategy to respond to this mismatch between people's needs and available services in the inner suburbs. The purpose was to strengthen and supplement the existing services, reduce poverty, and engage local residents in community planning in thirteen neighbourhoods.

Has the strategy worked? This study looks at one of the Priority Neighbourhoods (Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park) in Scarborough, and its social infrastructure.

PROFILE OF A PRIORITY NEIGHBOURHOOD

The neighbourhood of Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park had a population of 31,715 in 1971, and 40,846 in 2006 (see note about data boundaries on bottom of page 11). Between 1971 and 2005, household income in the neighbourhood dropped 35% as a percentage of the average for the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area. In 1971, 26% of the population in the KGO area was immigrants, compared

Social infrastructure is not just the social services or programs available to residents of a neighbourhood, but the area's resources and relationships, such as spaces for gathering, 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 necessarily local.

THE THREE CITIES WITHIN TORONTO

Income Polarization Among Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005

BY J. DAVID HULCHANSKI, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
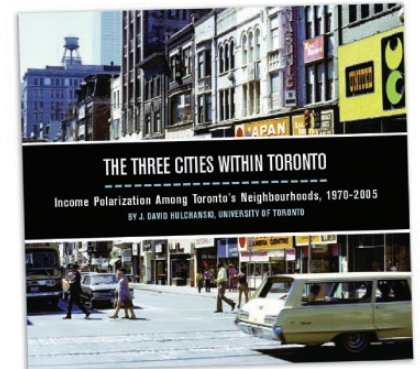
THREE CITIES WITHIN TORONTO

to obtain a copy of the report and to view the interactive web version go to

www.**NeighbourhoodChange**.ca

to 48% in 2006. The population of re-
cent immigrants also rose slightly dur-
ing this period, from 7% of the popu-
lation in 1971 to 11% in 2006. The
percentage of the population that was
a member of a visible minority group
was 63% in 2006 (see Figure 1).

Perhaps most striking are changes
in the local population's first language.
In 1971, more than 87% of the popu-
lation reported English as a mother
tongue. By 2006, this group had
dropped to 55% of the population. In
2006 the second largest mother
tongue after English was Tamil
(5.9%), followed by Gujurati (4.7%),
Urdu (3.7%), and Tagalog (3.4%).

This area holds the highest concen-
tration of social housing in Ontario. In
1986, the City of Toronto began con-
tracting with motels along Kingston
Road to provide emergency shelter for families. During the
1990s, on any given night, between 800 and 1,300 refugees and
homeless families inhabited a dozen or so motels in this area. In
1999, the City began phasing out the use of motels, and today
only four operate as shelters. Meanwhile, the City's "Streets to
Homes" policy has relocated many formerly homeless people
from the downtown core to apartments in the neighbourhood.

Nevertheless, KGO is widely recognized for its vibrant civic
culture, its active and organized resident base, and a wide range
of social, recreational, and educational activities sponsored by
diverse groups and agencies. These groups have been recog-
nized for successful advocacy for policy change, commitment to
environmental justice and food security, awards for youth envi-
ronmental innovation, citations from policy institutes for cre-
ative approaches to service provision and community develop-
ment, and strong connections to academic institutions.

How has KGO made the transition from being one of the
most underserviced communities in the city to being a model of
positive change? What can we learn from the work done there?

THE STORY OF THE EAST SCARBOROUGH STOREFRONT

Part of the neighbourhood's positive trajectory can be
traced to the efforts of the East Scarborough Storefront, a
unique collaboration between service providers and the com-
munity. About 40 partner agencies offer services and pro-
grams in a common facility, governed by both community and
service-sector representatives. The Storefront is much more
than 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.

MAP 2: POPULATION DENSITY OF LOW-INCOME NEIGHBOURHOODS, SCARBOROUGH, 2006

Persons Per Square Kilometre 2006 in Census Tracts with Average Individual Income in 2005 Less than $32,563 (80% of the Toronto CMA average)

High Density
5,198 or more persons per sq km

Medium Density
2,694 to 5,197 persons per sq km

Low Density
2,693 or less persons per sq km

Population density intervals based on three quantiles of all census tracts in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area.

Not Low-Income Neighbourhoods

City of Toronto Priority Neighbourhoods (2005)

Bloor-Danforth Subway and Scarborough RT

Steeles Ave E
MicNicoll Ave
Kennedy Rd
Finch Ave E
Markham Rd
McCowan Rd
Midland Ave
Sheppard Ave E
Sheppard Ave E
Hwy 401
Morningside Ave
Birchmount Rd
Ellesmere Rd
Port Union Rd
Victoria Park Ave
Lawrence Ave E
Scarborough Golf Club Rd
Kingston-Galloway
Eglinton Ave E
Bellamy Rd
St. Clair Ave E
Kingston Rd
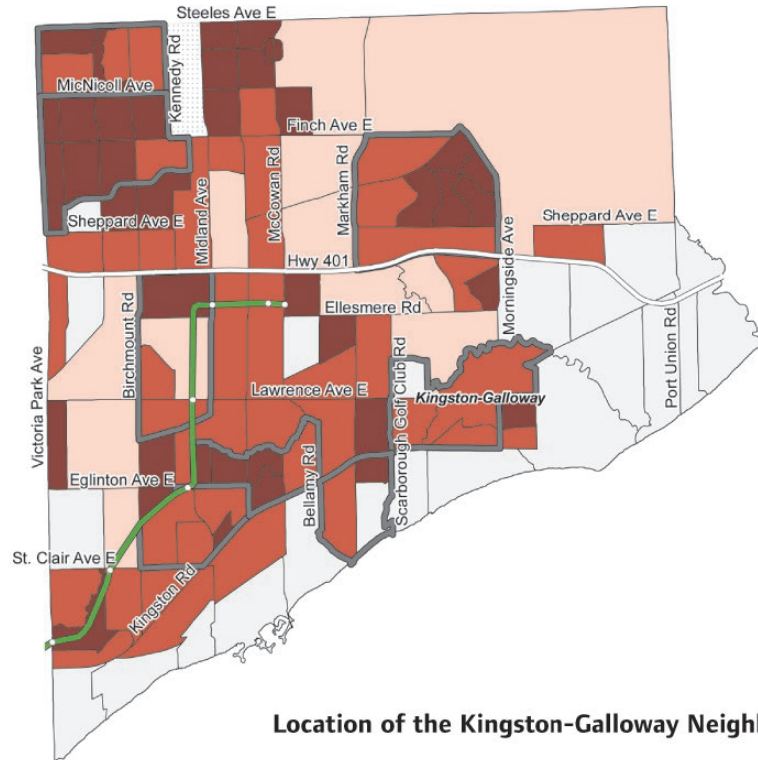
Location of the Kingston-Galloway Neighbourhood
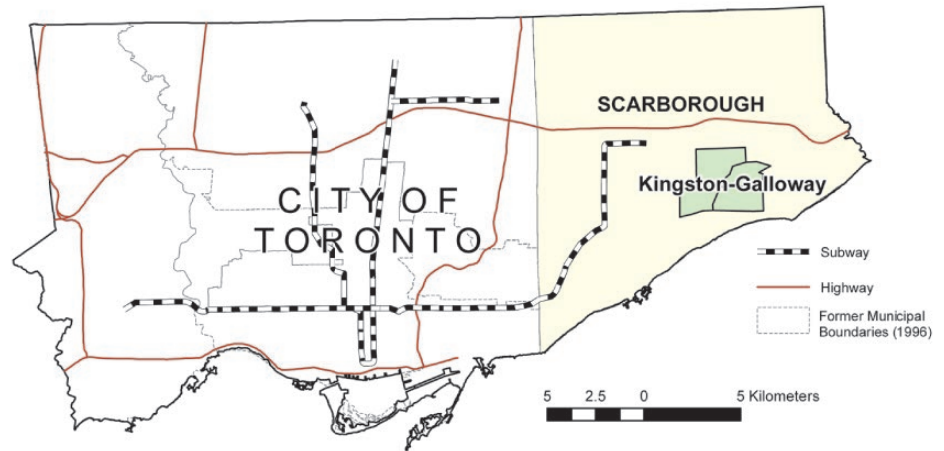
SCARBOROUGH

CITY OF TORONTO

Kingston-Galloway

Subway
Highway
Former Municipal Boundaries (1996)

5   2.5   0   5 Kilometers

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL INCOME, CITY OF TORONTO, RELATIVE TO THE TORONTO CMA, 1970-2005

1970   1980   1990
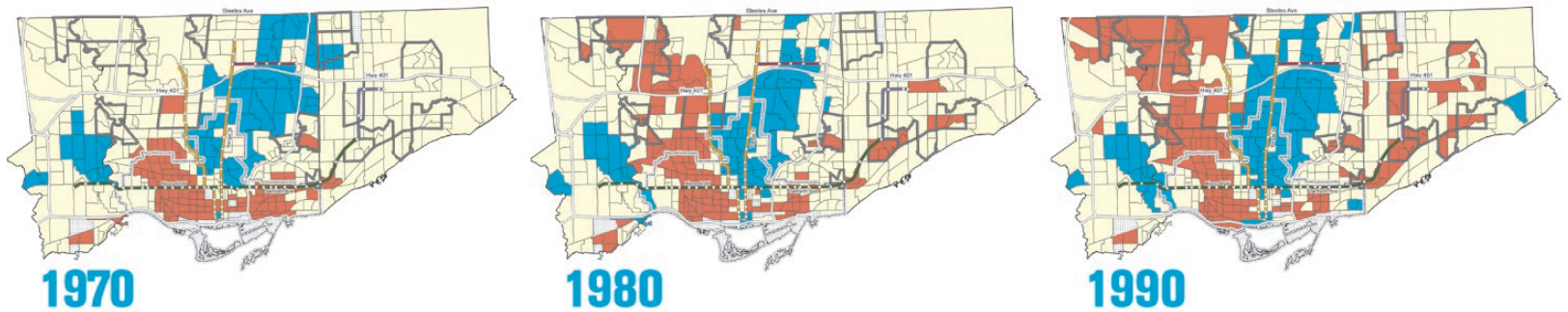
The Storefront opened in 2001 in the Morningside Mall. Three years later, up to 5,400 residents were using the Storefront each month for everything from employment services, to health clinics, to youth arts, to meditation for Tamil seniors. The Storefront became so valuable to the community that when it was threatened with closure after a loss of funding in 2005, hundreds of residents demonstrated to save it. This demonstration not only secured the support of local politicians to save the Storefront, but also helped build local infrastructure.

The demonstration required organization, persistence, and the confidence of residents and staff organizers. It displayed the growing strength of this community, and changed the dynamics of suburban politics, which tend to focus only on the needs of established middle-class communities. It not only secured a new home for the Storefront on Lawrence Ave., but also shattered entrenched forms of inequality.

The success of the Storefront model has been recognized in attempts to reproduce its "hub" structure elsewhere in the city. It provides "one-stop" access to a range of resources in the dispersed, underserviced suburban environment, where it is hard to get around and transit is scarce. The collaborative nature of the Storefront hub model, where different service providers and communi-

ty members cooperate to provide responsive resources, has also allowed a sense of community ownership of the facility to flourish.

BEYOND THE STOREFRONT: DOES THE PRIORITY NEIGHBOURHOOD STRATEGY WORK?

The Storefront has been central to community-building in KGO over the last decade, yet it is also part of a broader process of change that began long before the Priority Neighbourhood strategy was developed. Priority Neighbourhood resources do support projects and programs in KGO, but many successful initiatives in KGO predate Priority Neighbourhoods. Local relationships, networks, and commitment that already existed among residents and service providers have contributed to successful community-building in KGO.

The Priority Neighbourhood strategy supports ongoing and new initiatives through staff time, honoraria, and accessibility supports and has helped strengthen individual organizations, while contributing to community-wide planning.

The Priority Neighbourhood strategy has brought new and much-needed investment to communities, helping to correct a long history of neglect, but it does not in itself solve the problem of concentrated poverty.

1995   **2000**   **2005**
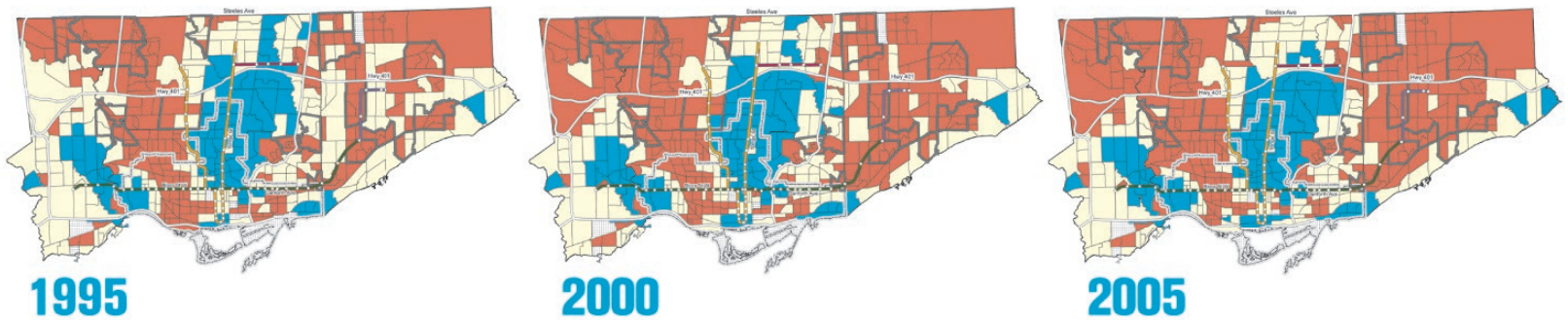
The current neighbourhood strategy entails a heavy reliance on the existing capacity of communities and agencies to carry out the goals of collaborative planning, yet resources in the Priority Neighbourhoods are often scarce. The City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Action Partnership (NAP) needs additional staff time and office space within the community to support communities more effectively. Neighbourhoods require increased and more reliable investment to support community planning and development.

Priority Neighbourhood strategies emphasize resident engagement as a means to strengthen communities. Yet, while civic engagement initiatives are important elements of building strong and inclusive communities, they are not an effective means of poverty reduction. Concentrated and racialized poverty manifests itself at the neighbourhood scale but does not originate there, therefore efforts to strengthen neighbourhoods must involve aggressive anti-poverty strategies that work at multiple scales.

Engagement strategies often rely on residents' volunteering their time in the community, and indeed, resi-

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.

— SERVICE PROVIDER IN KINGSTON-GALLOWAY/ORTON PARK

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… Unless we are working on changes to education systems, Safe Schools Act, or you know, people's access to income security, or quality of work.

— COMMUNITY PROGRAM FUNDER

FIGURE 1: VISIBLE MINORITY and WHITE POPULATION, CITY OF TORONTO, SCARBOROUGH and KINGSTON-GALLOWAY, 1996-2006
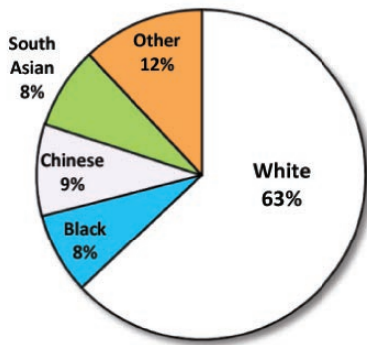
1996

City of Toronto

Scarborough

Kingston-Galloway Priority Neighbourhood
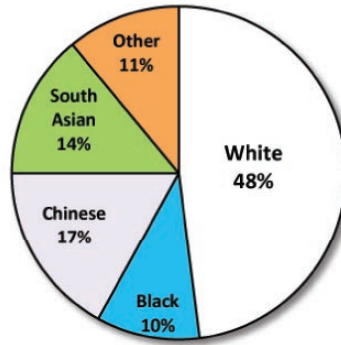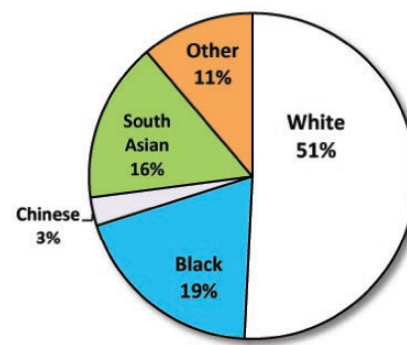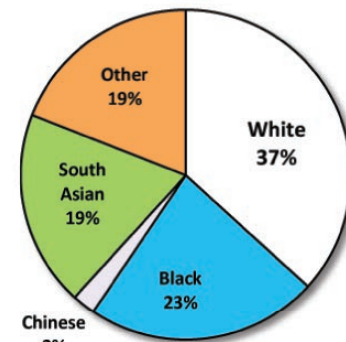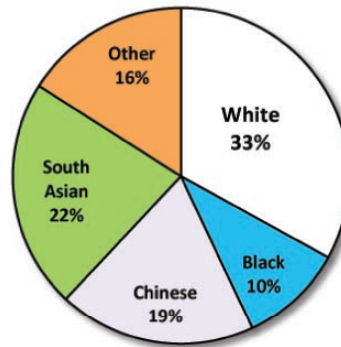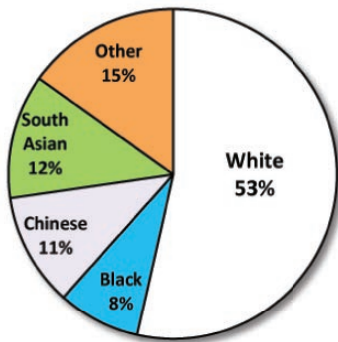
2006

Note: Kingston-Galloway Priority neighbourhood data is based on 1996 enumeration areas and 2006 dissemination areas. In 1996 there is overlap with EA 35076101 which has been included in the data. Source: Canada Census

dents in KGO report extraordinarily high levels of voluntary participation. 'Volunteerism' can result in burnout and can be a source of frustration for residents who are keen to take on leadership roles. Organizations within priority neighbourhoods should prioritize not only resident 'engagement' but the cultivation of skills and leadership opportunities.

LEARNING FROM KINGSTON-GALLOWAY/ORTON PARK

What can we learn from this study of Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park?

First, its success in building social infrastructure stems from efforts supported by but predating its Priority Neighbourhood designation. Active and organized residents, a collaborative approach to community planning and service provision, a common

FIGURE 2: CHANGE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD INCOME DISTRIBUTION IN SCARBOROUGH, 1970-2005

■ 1970 ■ 1980 ■ 1990 ■ 2000 □ 2005

Decline in middle income neighbourhoods from 96% of Scarborough to 15%; the biggest fall came between 1990 and 2000.

"Middle income" defined as 20% above or below the average individual income in greater Toronto (the CMA) for each individual year

Percentage of Total Census Tracts in Scarborough

	Very High Income More than 40% Above	High Income 20% Above to 40% Above	Middle Income 20% Below to 20% Above	Low Income 20% Below to 40% Below	Very Low Income More than 40% Below
1970	0%	2%	96%	2%	0%
2005	1%	2%	15%	62%	20%

Census Tract Average Individual Income (Persons 15 and Over) Relative to Toronto CMA Average For Each Census Year

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2006. Cross-sectional census tract boundaries.

space for meeting, and supportive and flexible funding have long been characteristic of social organizing in Southeast Scarborough.

Nevertheless, investment in underserviced neighbourhoods is needed to reverse the effects of decades of underinvestment and the effects of population change. 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.

The strategy has supported many creative attempts to facilitate resident leadership and collective empowerment. Organi-

zations that focus on equity, access, and anti-oppression have demonstrated commitment to investing in residents. Ongoing training, the recognition and sharing of local skills, transparent and collaborative governance practices, and opportunities to connect with networks and groups within and beyond the community are a few means of supporting resident leadership.

MAKING POVERTY REDUCTION A PRIORITY: TAKING A BROADER APPROACH

The study led to recommendations to support the important work under way in KGO and other neighbourhoods. The recommendations highlight the need to better support neighbour-

hood planning initiatives, improve resident engagement initiatives, and 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 critical.

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 could not operate successfully. Therefore, the Partnership should receive adequate funding, and should be cultivated in all city neighbourhoods, not just Priority Neighbourhoods.

3. Create social infrastructure that supports resident leadership
Despite unanimous support for resident engagement in local community development work, some engagement models may exploit residents' time and energy. Clear lines of accountability are needed, along with opportunities for residents to participate in policy and program design and for diverse participation in community and organizational governance, as well as the use of multiple forms of participation.

4. Address the complexities and persistence of racism
Most organizations support inclusion and equity, but direct commitments to social justice and anti-oppression in community development are needed, including training for staff and opportunities for residents to make their voices heard on the subject.

5. Make funding flexible and sustainable
Flexible and sustainable funding is essential for building social infrastructure. Community development cannot take a cookie-cutter approach.

6. Align the solution with the problem
Although the Priority Neighbourhood strategy was developed in response to the growth of concentrated poverty and all three levels of government support it financially, sustained action on a broader approach to poverty reduction is lacking. The city should coordinate anti-poverty initiatives across Priority Neighbourhood sites by identifying systemic issues shared by many neighbourhoods and 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.
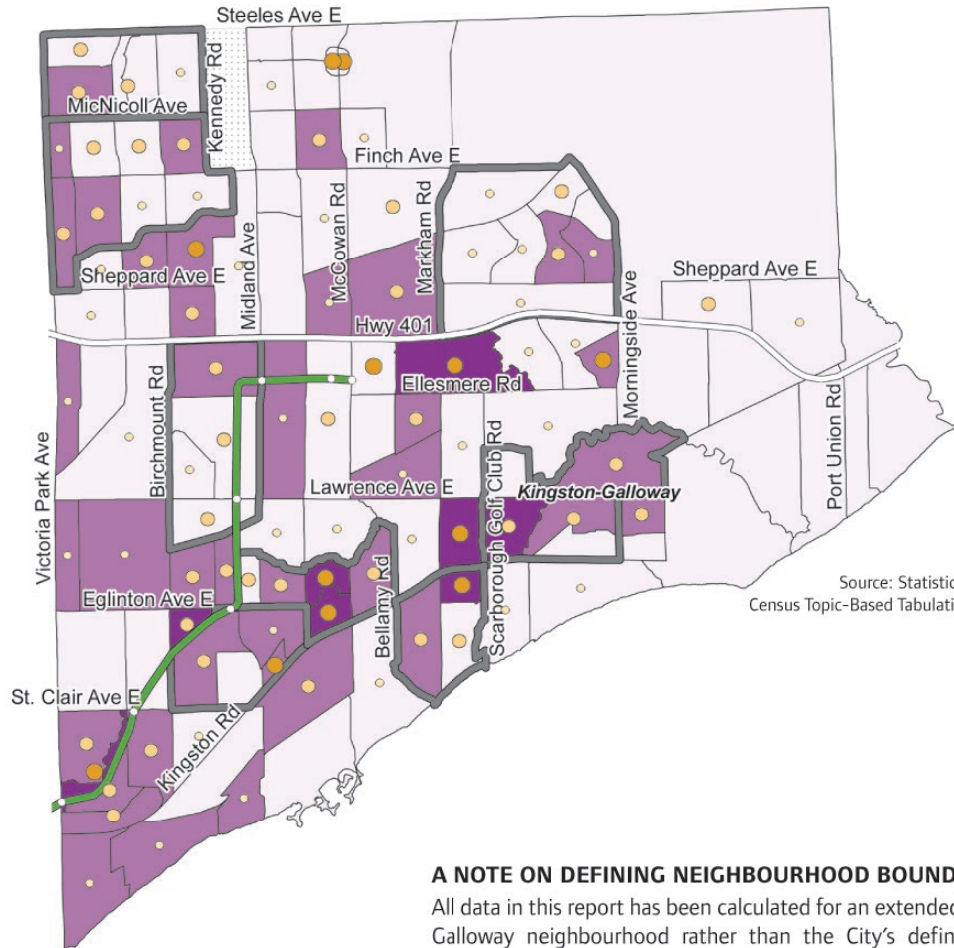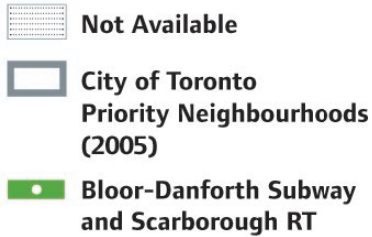
This final recommendation is intended to help overcome some of the limitations of the Priority Neighbourhoods strategy. Poor neighbourhoods in Toronto's inner suburbs are the product of citywide patterns of social polarization, the concentration of poverty, and the marginalization of racialized groups. These patterns stem from political and economic shifts at multiple scales, including the deindustrialization of the economy, the rise of precarious work, the dismantling of social protections, the growing problem of housing affordability, limited access to transportation, and racism in local labour and housing markets. Therefore, to address the causes of concentrated neighbourhood poverty, action must take place within and beyond the neighbourhood scale. ★

MAP 3: NEIGHBOURHOODS WITH A CONCENTRATION OF RENTERS and HIGH-RISE APARTMENTS IN SCARBOROUGH, 2006

Percentage of Census Tract Total Dwellings that are Rented

- 66% to 98%
- 33% to 65.9%
- 2% to 32.9%
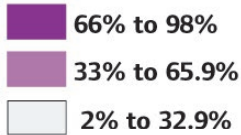
Percentage of Census Tract Total Dwellings that are High-Rise Apartments (buildings with 5 of more storeys)

- ○ 3% to 32.9%
- ○ 33% to 65.9%
- ● 66% to 100%

Not Available

City of Toronto Priority Neighbourhoods (2005)

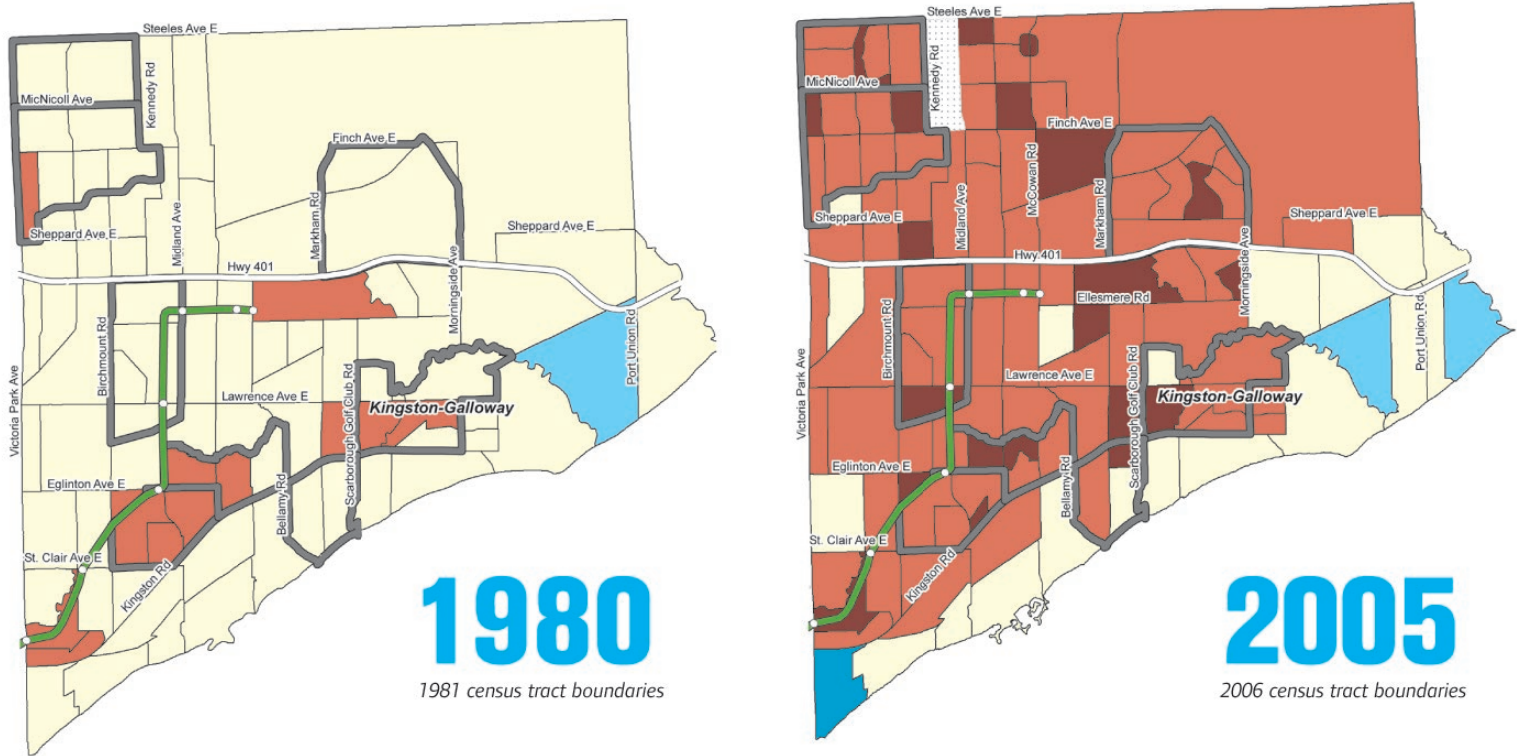Bloor-Danforth Subway and Scarborough RT

Scarborough 2006

203,020 Total Dwellings
69,385 Rented Dwellings (34%)
67,840 High-Rise Apartments (33%)

46,400 Rented High-Rise Apartments
(67% of Rented Dwellings, 23% of Total Dwellings)

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Topic-Based Tabulations, 2006

A NOTE ON DEFINING NEIGHBOURHOOD BOUNDARIES

All data in this report has been calculated for an extended Kingston-Galloway neighbourhood rather than the City's defined Priority Neighbourhood area in order to generate comparable and consistent census data over a long time. The extended neighbourhood in this report is based on constant 1971 census tract boundaries. The City's Priority Neighbourhood is based on 2001 dissemination area boundaries which makes the calculation of historical data back to 1971 difficult. This means that the numbers in this report will differ somewhat with other sources which have the data calculated for the Priority Neighbourhood boundary.

MAP 4: AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL INCOME, SCARBOROUGH, 1980 and 2005

1980
1981 census tract boundaries

2005
2006 census tract boundaries

Census Tract Average Individual Income Relative to the Toronto CMA Average ($12,500 in 1980 and $40,700 in 2005)

Very High
More than 140% Above
In Scarborough:
in 1980: 0%
in 2005: 1%

High
120% to 140% Above
In Scarborough:
in 1980: 1%
in 2005: 2%

Middle Income
80% Below to 120% Above
In Scarborough:
in 1980: 82%
in 2005: 15%

Low
60% to 80% Below
In Scarborough:
in 1980: 17%
in 2005: 62%

Very Low
Less than 60% Below
In Scarborough:
in 1980: 0%
in 2005: 20%

Data not available

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