

KENSINGTON-CHINATOWN

RESOURCE & NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

KATHRYN LIN

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Special mention to everyone who participated in this survey, and took the time to be part of my research; I owe my deepest gratitude to all of you.

The survey has helped me to better understand community services and increased my connection with the Kensington – Chinatown neighborhood. I look forward to serving or doing things for my community in the future.



TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
1. Introduction	4 - 5
2. Data analyze and key findings	6 -14
3. Kensington-Chinatown Profile	15-26
History of Kensington–Chinatown	17-22
Demography of Kensington – Chinatown	22-25
Community Resource	26
4. Recommendations	27-29
5. Thoughts	30
6. Appendix of Questions for Interview	31
7. Appendix of Survey Result	32



INTRODUCTION

During November 2010 to January 2011, with the help of Toronto Centre for Community of Learning & Development, ten Immigrant Women Integration Program trainees designed a questionnaire by using the concept of the Canadian Index of Well-Being (CIW). They then conducted the survey for the residents in the their designated neighborhoods, which included Eglinton East/Kennedy, Flemingdon Park/Victoria Village, Jane and Finch, Lawrence Heights, Moss Park, Regent Park, St. Jamestown and Kensington-Chinatown.

The purpose of this Community Needs Assessment Survey in Kensington-Chinatown neighborhood is to determine the community resources and needs, to identify the different barriers residents are facing, and also assist local service agencies to review preliminary results and to input on suggestions for further actions.

The survey questionnaire was created based on the concept of the Canadian Index of Well-being which is a new way of measuring the quality of life of Canadians. CIW is the only national index that measures



well-being in Canada across a wide spectrum of domains which are Art, Culture and Recreation; Civic Engagement; Community Vitality; Education; Environment; Healthy Population; Living Standard and Time Use.

<http://ciw.ca/en/TheCanadianIndexOfWellbeing.aspx>

The Kensington-Chinatown survey was done by using three methods: an online survey, hard copy questionnaires and key informant interviews. Because Chinese is the majority population in this area, the questionnaire was provided in English and Chinese. Around 500 letters and bookmarks with the link to online survey were also distributed.

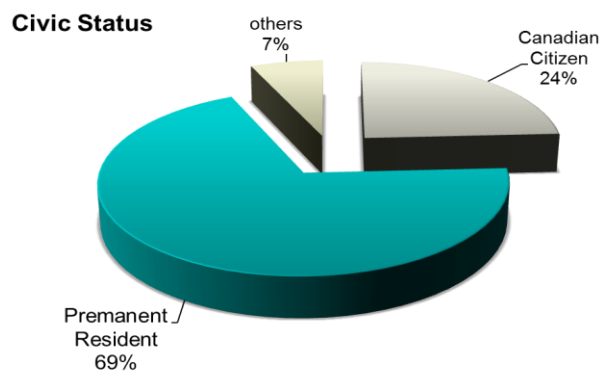
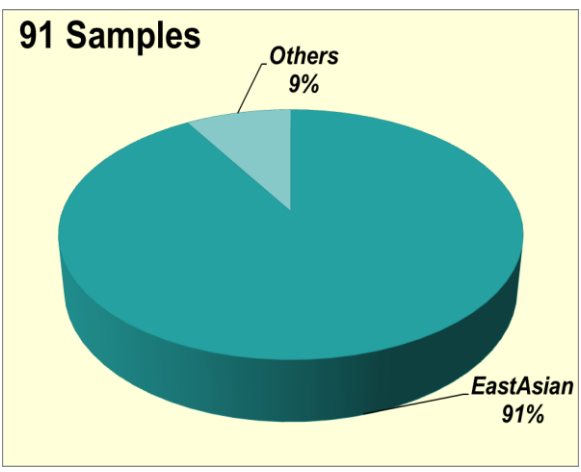
91 residents responded to the online survey, eight of whom were interviewed face-to-face, including long-term residents, community agency directors, and the local MP within this area. They provided deeper and more realistic information about the neighborhood, which contributed to the recommendations for this report.



DATA ANALYSIS-KEY FINDINGS

The Kensington-Chinatown neighborhood survey involved 91 respondents. Most respondents were between the ages of 17 to 65 years.

1. The majority of this community is Chinese, and most of them are new Permanent Residents to this area.

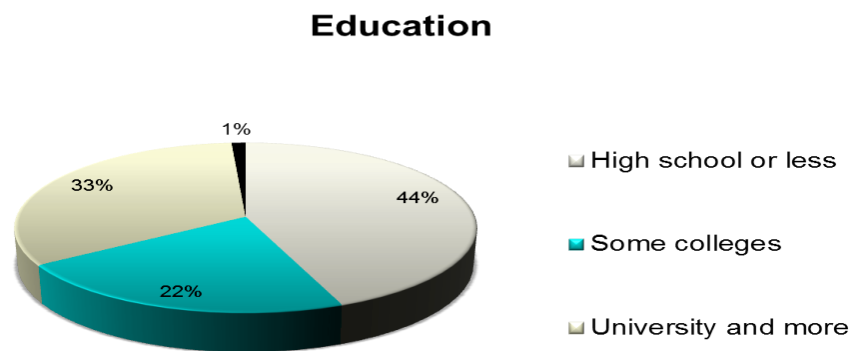


From the survey results, it is clear that 91% of the respondents were East Asian (mainly Chinese); among them Canadian Citizen are 24%, Permanent Resident are 69%; 74% of respondents have been living in their neighborhood less than 2 years.

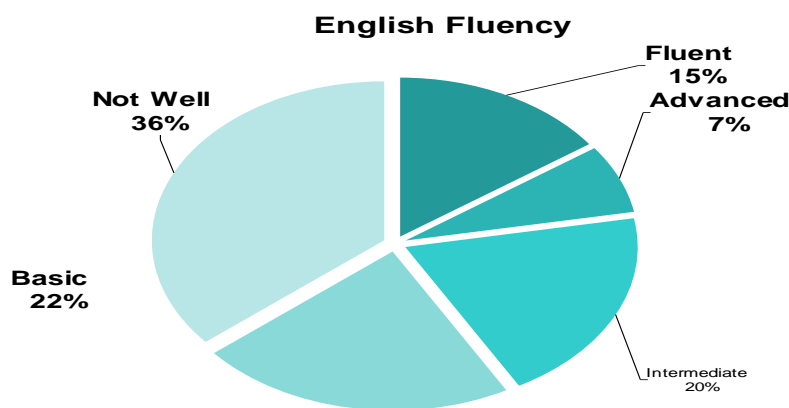


Other data also shows the identities of the respondents: 100% of them state they do not consider themselves as disabled; 23% are male; 69% are female; and 1% of them stated that they are gay.

2. *Two different levels of education were reported:* 44% of them have high school or less than high school education; 33% have above university level education.



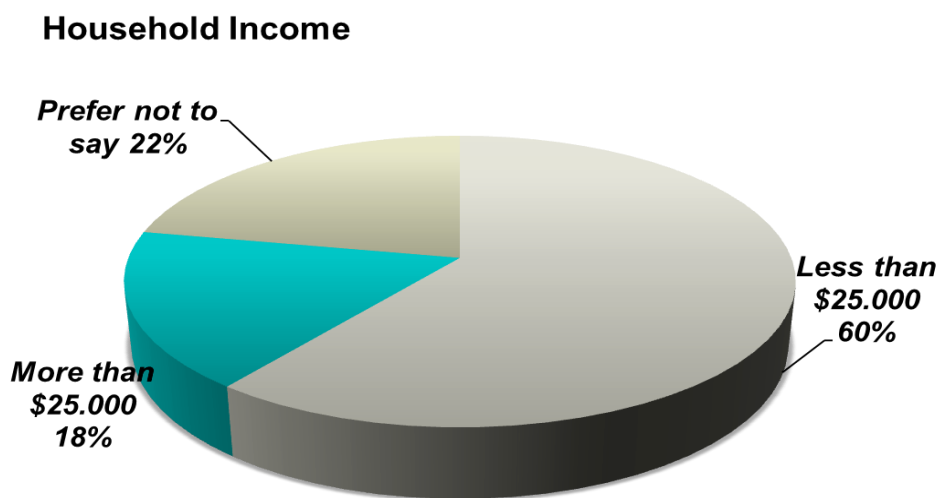
3. *Language barrier is a big issue in Kensington – Chinatown.*





Only 15% of the respondents identify themselves as having the ability to speak fluent English; but 58% said that they do not speak English well or speak very basic English.

4. *Most residents of Kensington – Chinatown are low income families.*



Household income shows that 60% of the respondents’ annual income is less than \$25,000; 18% of respondents’ annual income is more than \$25,000 and 22% of respondents prefer not to say.

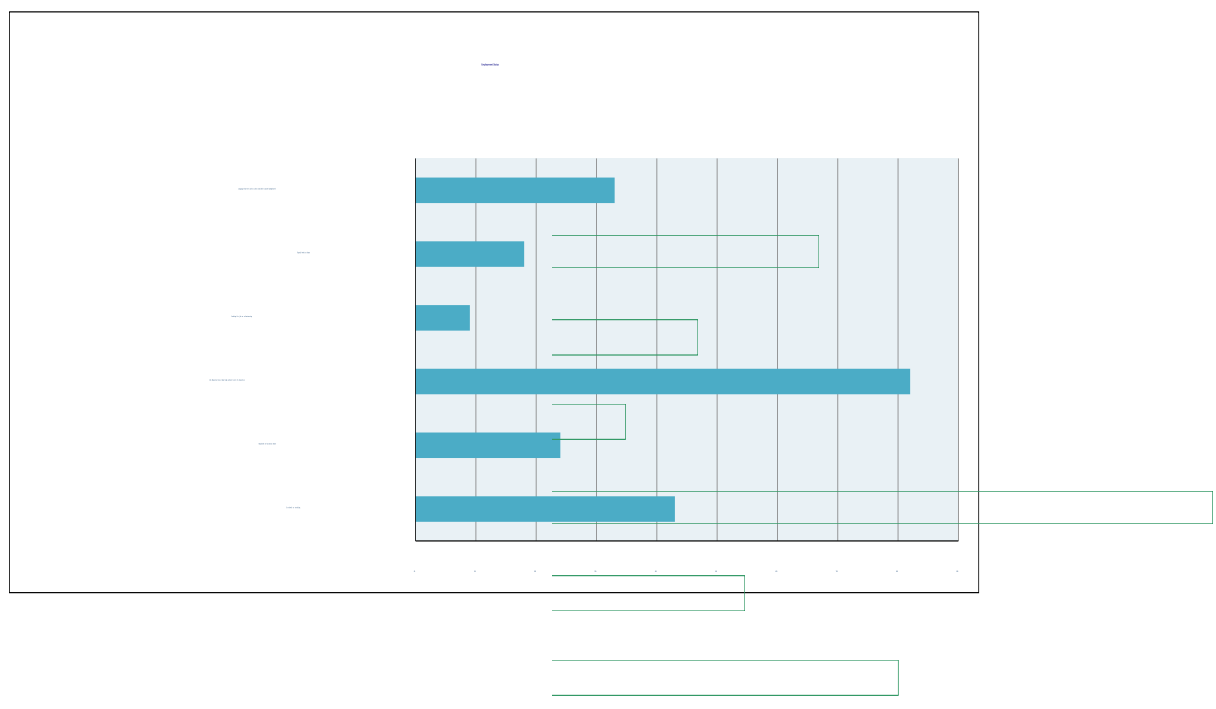
5. *Majority of the participants are working in jobs that do not require a high level of education.*

Only 24% of the respondents are employed or business owners and 82% of jobs are required less than high school level of education.





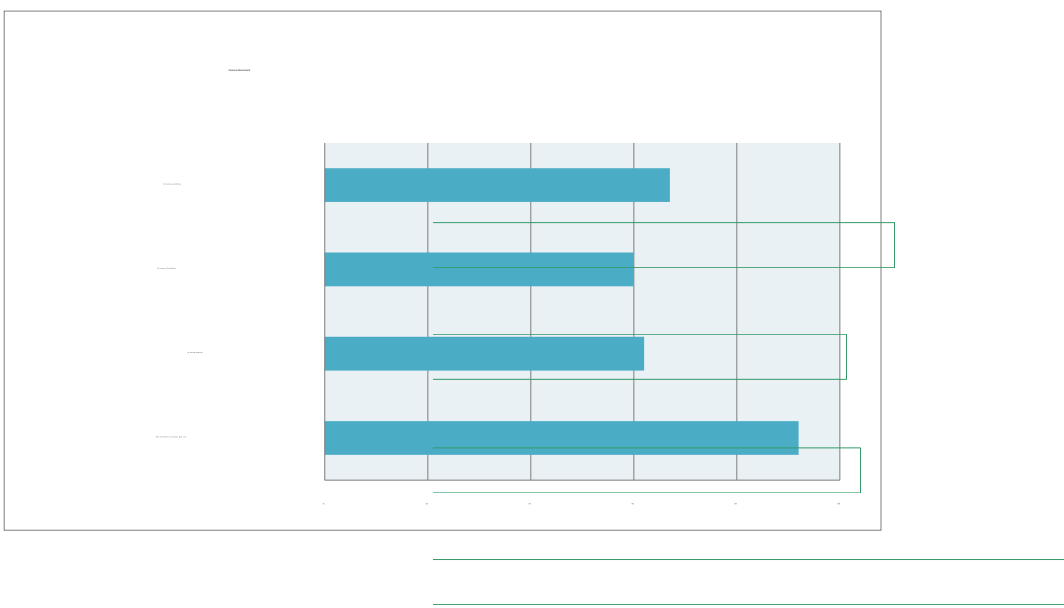
Most residents prepare for work by using their own savings.



70% of them rent housing and 60% of respondents' family income is less than \$25,000, but 72% have saving account and 51% are not used social support, such as food band, social assistance, subsidized housing, and subsidized daycare and so on. 52% of respondents are currently in school, in training or looking for jobs, but 33% of respondents claimed that language barrier and no jobs available caused unemployed.



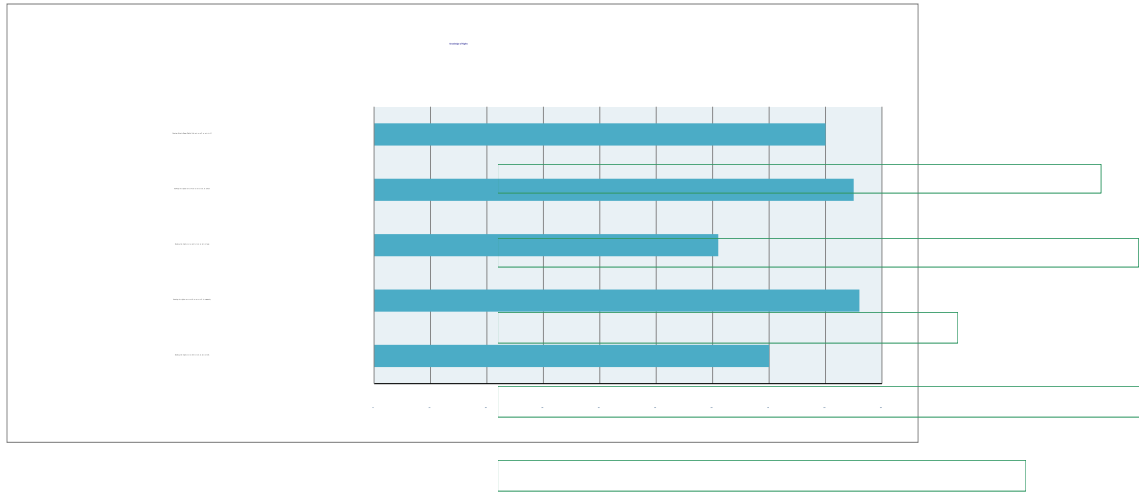
6. Most participants rate themselves as physically and mentally healthy.



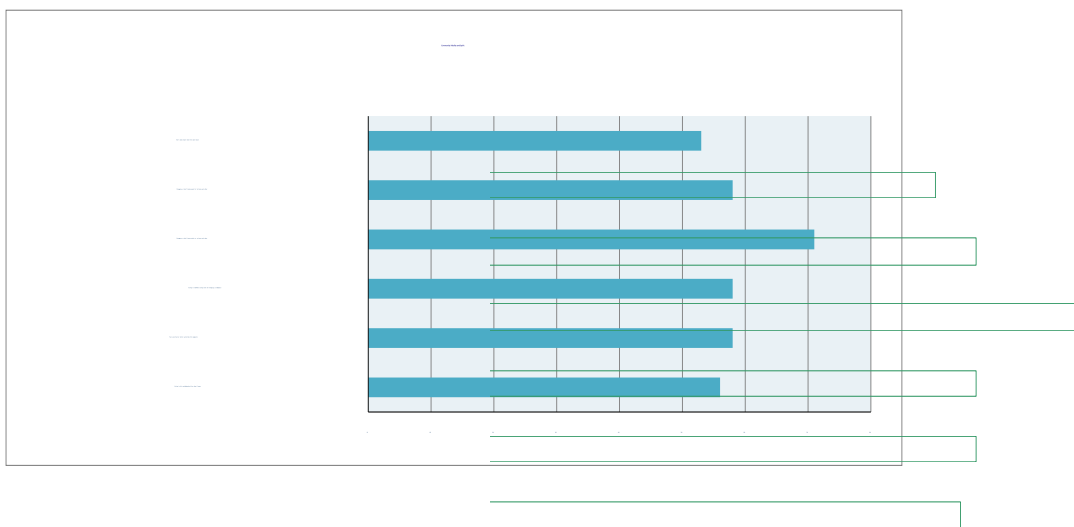
92% of respondents rated their health as “very good”, “good” or “fair”. More than 60% of them do not feel worthless, at a stage of losing self-confidence or feeling depressed.



8. A high percentage of respondents are not familiar with, or know nothing about the Ontario Human Rights Code, their rights at school, home, work or community.

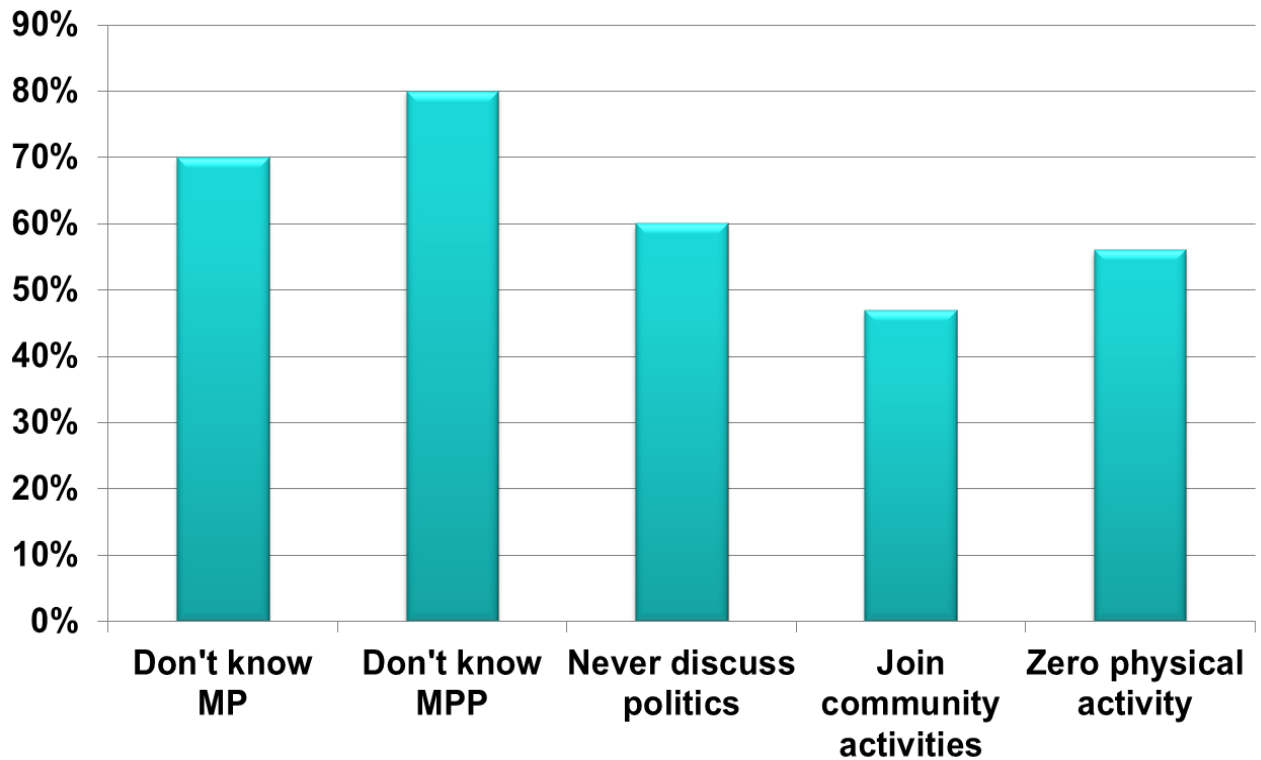


9. The majority of participants are satisfied and having a sense of belonging with their community, even though they do not really know the others.





10. *The residents of Kensington – Chinatown are not actively involved in their community or civic engagement.*



Another indicator shows that 56% of respondents had done zero vigorous physical activity in last 7 days, but in the questionnaire of their mobility, seeing, hearing and speaking, above 92% of respondents did not show any problem. In other words, they are healthy although no physically active; 70% said they don't know their MP; 85% said they don't know their MPP; and 62% had not ever discussed politics.



11. *Most of participants have a healthy level of social support from family and friends.*

Social support questions that were asked:

Are people living among family or friends?

Who does things to make me happy?

Who makes me feel loved?

Who can I rely on no matter what happens?

Who can accept me as I am?

Who would take care of me when help is needed?

Who gives me support and encouragement?



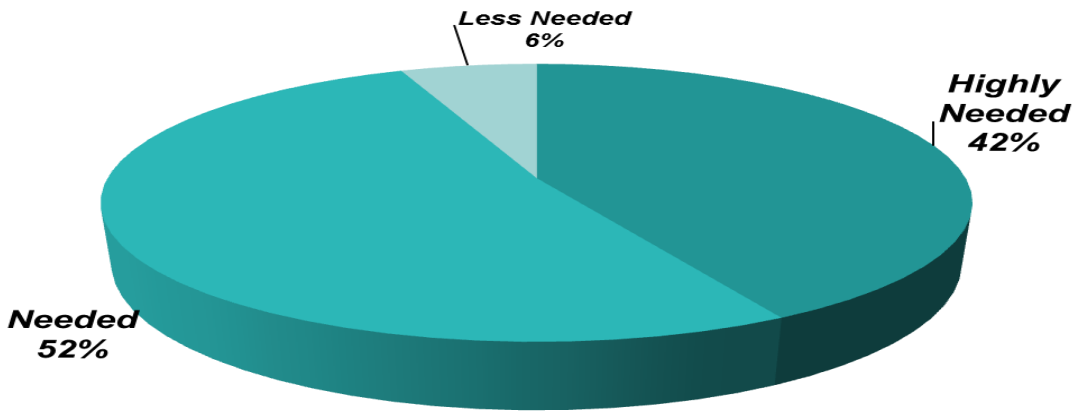
12. *The majority of participants have no idea about what kind of social services need to be changed.*

More than half of respondents claimed that they do not know the quality of the community services or do not know social services programs such as housing, policing, daycare, food banks / community gardens, community spirit, employment, immigration, and services for youth, families and people with disabilities.



13. 94% of the respondents claimed that there should be more activities to promote youth leadership skills (such as tutoring program; skills building, job development, digital storytelling...etc).

Youth Programs

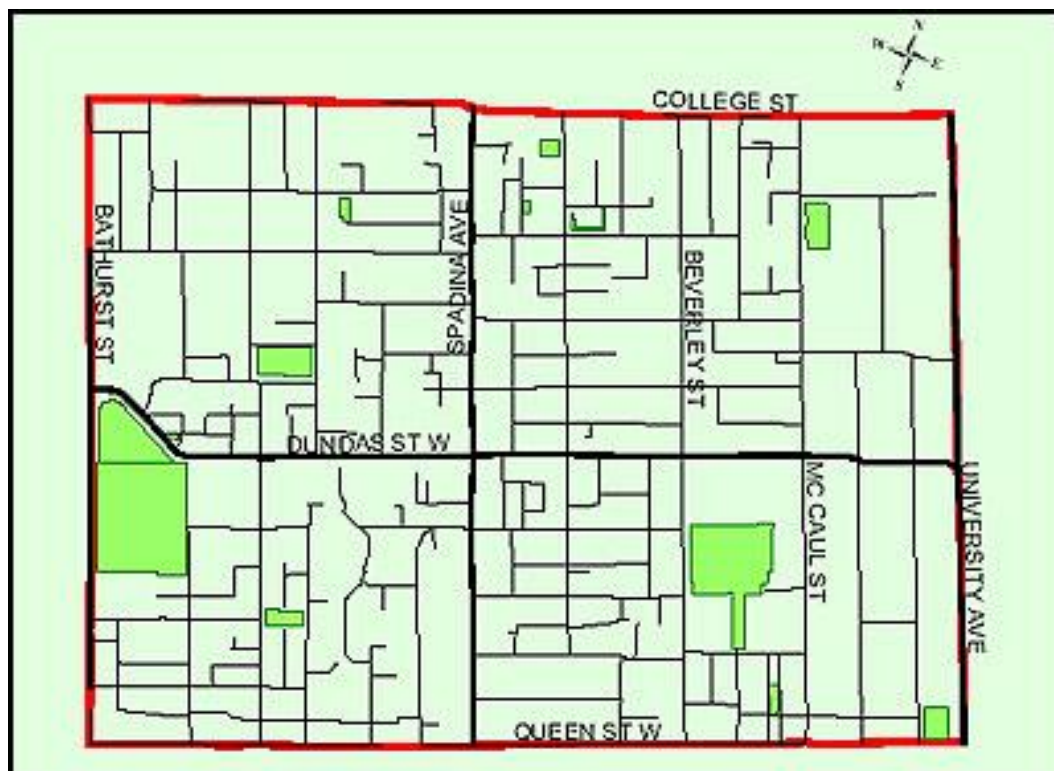


14. Most residents felt that this is a safe neighborhood.

About 80% or more of the participants claimed that drunk or rowdy; garbage or litter; vandalism; property damage; drugs; faith and religious tolerance; ethnic or race tolerance; ideal teenagers; troublesome neighbors are not a problem in this community.



KENSINGTON-CHINATOWN NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE



Kensington-Chinatown neighborhood is called Toronto 78th area. It is bounded by Bathurst Street and University Avenue, and Queen and College Streets. Kensington Market and Chinatown are two significant places in this neighborhood.



HISTORY

Kensington Market is one of the oldest parts of the City of Toronto, and is a microcosm of Canada's ethnic mosaic, where many different ethno cultural communities maintained a dynamic, culturally diverse market, and contributed to a vibrant street life.

Many of the houses and institutions here were built in the 1800s. The City of Toronto's first Bell Centre building was in Kensington, along with one of the first fire halls – and the first to have a motorized fire engine.



Bellevue' original Denison Estate, Denison Square (1885)



Kensington Market, 1924

In 1815, George Denison's house, called Bellevue, was built roughly on the spot where the Kiever Synagogue now stands. In the 1870s, Kensington Community was born.



By the early 1900s, the first residents were Jews laborers and skilled tradesmen from Central and Southern Europe. The Jewish Market was called; it was like an Eastern European Market, with its crated chickens, live fish, pickles and cheeses made in the back room, and the smell of bagels and bread wafting over it all. In Kensington, religious groups, social agencies and political movements all worked to help individuals and change society.

By the 1950's, most of the Jewish population had moved out of Kensington, and the neighborhood was filled with new immigrants including: Italians, Ukrainians, Hungarians, and people from the Caribbean. Immigrants came to Kensington because it was very friendly, secure and the strong community spirit reminded many newcomers of their homes.

By the 1970s, the face of Kensington had changed, as a wave of new immigrants from China, Hong Kong and Vietnam started to settle in the area. They continued the old “Kensington” tradition of using the first floor of their homes as stores. The Chinese community grew rapidly and today makes up over 40% of the Kensington population. Local businesses have changed accordingly to keep up with the demand. The fruit and vegetable stands that sprawl out to the sidewalks along Spadina Avenue are an exciting addition to the already colorful Kensington Market.



In the 1980s refugees from Southeast Asia started to arrive, primarily from China, Vietnam, Laos and Latin America also found their way into Kensington Market. More recent immigrants are from Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Iran and Saudi Arabia and from many other parts of the world.

Today the neighborhood is a noted tourist attraction, and a centre of Toronto's cultural life as artists and writers moved into the area. Land prices in the area have increased sharply, but despite its increased appeal to professionals, Kensington still remains a predominantly working class, immigrant community.

Kensington has a festival of light on the Solstice Dec. 21st, Chinese Festivals and the Grange Park festival. These types of events bring people together to celebrate their diversity and what they share in common.

In November, 2006, Kensington Market was proclaimed a National Historic Site of Canada.



Chinatown along Spadina Avenue

Chinatown is now one of the largest Chinatowns in North America. The earliest record of Toronto's Chinese community is traced to Sam Ching, who owned a hand laundry business on Adelaide Street in 1878. Chinatown took shape over the next two decades along York

Street and Elizabeth Street within Toronto's Ward district, as hundreds of Chinese men settled close to Union Station due to its convenience after helping to build the Canadian Pacific railway across Canada. In 1930s, Chinatown was firmly established. Hundreds of Chinese-owned businesses had developed, consisting mainly of restaurants, grocery stores and hand laundries. The Chinese population greatly increased between 1947 and 1960, as students and skilled workers arrived from Hong Kong, Guangdong and Chinese communities in Southeast Asia.

In the late 1950s, construction of the new Toronto City Hall displaced most of Chinatown. In 1967, city planners proposed that Chinatown be moved again for the development of office buildings north of City Hall.



This endangered many more businesses. “Save Chinatown committee” was established at that time and fought for saving Chinatown.

Since the 1990s, Chinatown has been struggling to redefine itself in the face of an ageing Chinese population and the declining number of tourists visiting the enclave. As many younger, higher-income immigrants settled elsewhere in the city, those left in the district are typically from older generations who depend on downtown's dense concentration of services and accessibility to public transportation. Ethnic Chinese from Vietnam are now the faces of Toronto's old Chinatown and turning some parts into Little Saigon. Latin American immigrants are also moving into Toronto's old Chinatown.

In the 2000s, downtown neighborhoods became more attractive to urban professionals and young people who work in the Financial District, leading to the gentrification of surrounding areas and potentially changing the face of old Chinatown.

The **Financial District** is also a part of this area; it is the main financial heart of Canada. Its origins date back to the mid to late 19th Century when a number of early banks had head office located here, until the second half of the 20th Century did the Big Five banks have head offices emerged in Toronto.



It is the most densely built-up area of Toronto, many diplomatic missions and trade offices, corporate headquarters, high-powered legal and accounting firms, insurance companies and stockbrokers are located here.

There is a system of underground walkways, known as Path, which is unique facility in downtown Toronto. The companies of financial district are connected by the Path which lined with retail establishments making the area one of the most important shopping districts in Toronto. During the weekend, the walkways remain open but the area is almost deserted and most of the stores are closed in weekends. That is totally contrary to Chinatown or Kensington markets, which are open 365 days a year.



DEMOGRAPHY

2001 and 2006 Census show:

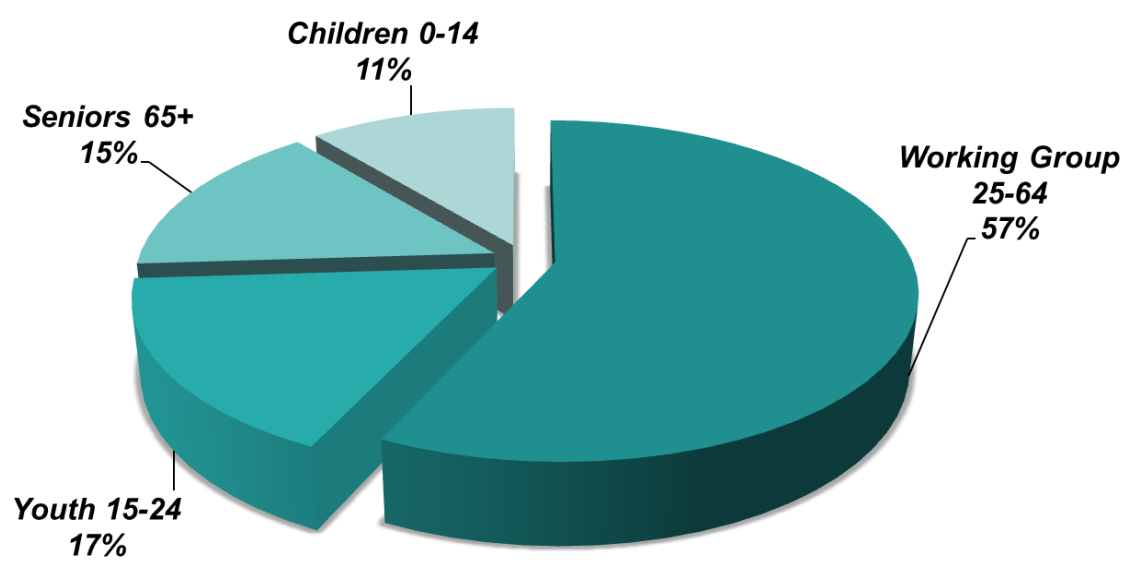
2001		2006		% Change 2001-2006
Number	%	Number	%	
17,090	100%	17,090	100%	0
2,185	12.8	1,810	10.6	-17.2
2,550	14.9	2,970	17.4	16.5
9,940	58.2	9,745	57	-2
2,430	14.2	2,555	15	5.1

Kensington-Chinatown is rapidly changing – between 2001 and 2006 the population remain the exactly the same, but the number of children (0-14 years old) had decreased by 17.2%. The number of youth (15-24 years old) had increased to 16.5% and number of seniors also increased 5.1%.



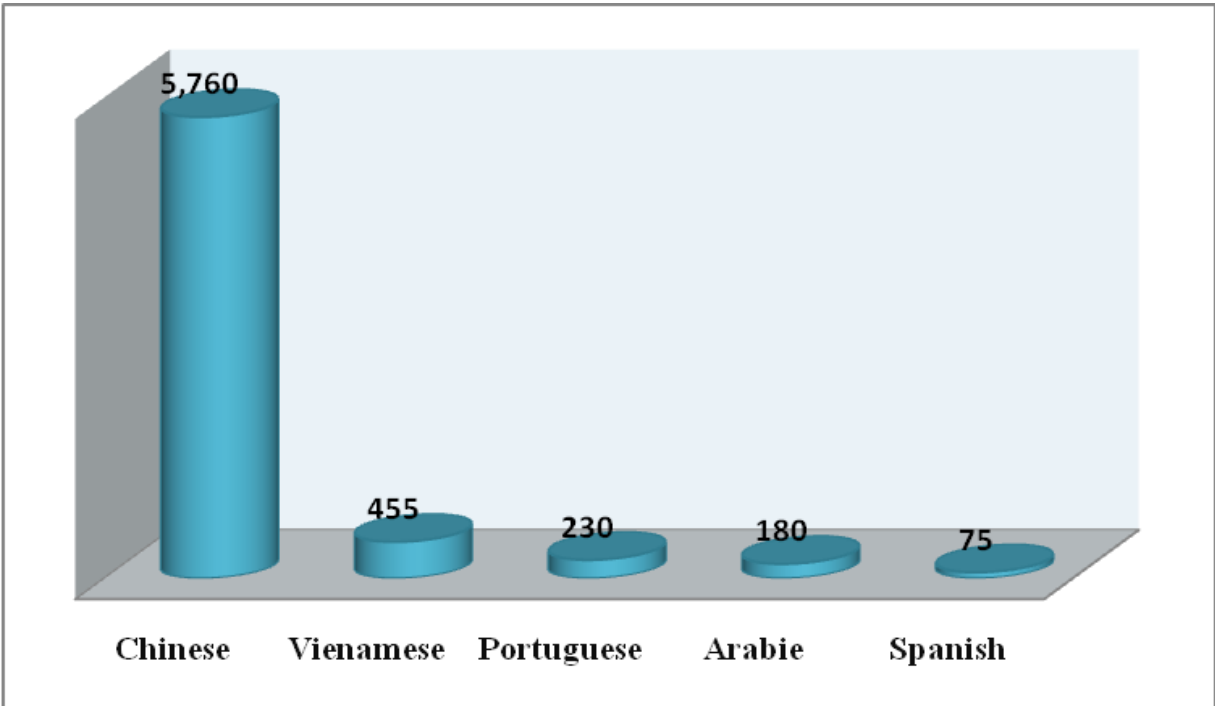
2006 Population 17,090

In this area the working group is 57% of the population of this area, the rest are seniors, youth and children. Dependency is lower than general. So, the people need more attention here.





According to Toronto demographics report, in 2006 there are 45.1% non-English home language people living here, and among these non-English speakers, Chinese is 34.4%, the rest are Vietnamese, Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish, Filipino, Korean, Bengali, Punjabi, Pashto and so on. We can see Chinese is the major population in this area and also various immigrants gather here.



Top 5 Home Languages



COMMUNITY RESOURCE

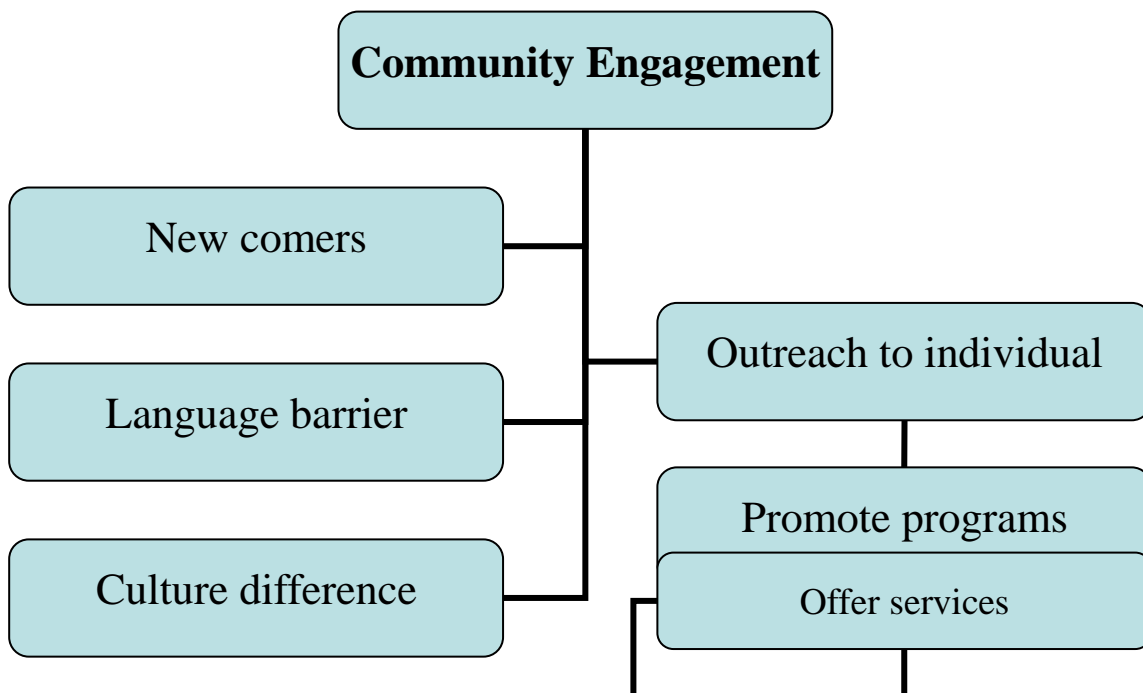
This is a very convenient place for inhabitancy. There are many public facilities around this neighborhood:

- ✧ Fifteen elementary and high schools, including University of Toronto, Ontario College of Arts and Design
- ✧ Four libraries
- ✧ Ten multi-service agencies, including Scadding Court Community, University Settlement Center, and St. Stephen's Community House. They offer a wide range of programs and services for newcomers, seniors, adults, youth and children including recreation and sports programs and health services
- ✧ Five local Food Programs and fifteen Neighborhood Food Resources are open in different times, seven days a week.
- ✧ Ten hospitals and health agencies



RECOMMENDATIONS

#1: Community Engagement – As more than 74% of population has been living in this neighborhood less than two years; and more than 58% of residents indicated that they were having language barrier, most of people would need to be engaged in community activities and civic movements. The more residents participate in community events, the more vigorous and healthy community will be. By engaging in such activities, the newcomers will also get a better sense of belonging and fully integrate themselves in their new country. I would like to recommend that community agencies try to outreach more to individual newcomer family in order to promote their services and programs.





#2 Resident to Resident Mentoring Program – As majority residents are of the same ethnic group, there are fewer obstacles for them to interact with each other. I would like to recommend community agencies to customize their programs, and train the local resident to be a mentor to someone new to the country or the neighborhood. These mentoring programs can touch on the needs of the community, such as education on the Ontario Human Rights; information on Government Election; advocating Access Equity; Festival Celebration or any sports games. After training, the potential community leaders can deliver the programs or be co-instructors, they will be the role models of the community. Such “Community Mentoring Program” will also increase the job opportunities for unemployed residents.

#3 Refining Our Home – There are many aging houses around the neighborhood - some of them are more than 150 years old and they do not look concordant with the modern times. The living conditions in some of these units are also deplorable and it is hard for one to imagine that people do live in such conditions. Having people to give a hand for refining the houses in the cheapest way, such as repaint the



house, introduce the government housing innovation plan or even plant the gardens can make residents work together to build the neighborhood together.

#4 Existing programs need to be strengthened - The barriers to the needs in this area are committed government funding for affordable housing, youth programs, mental health and addiction programs, counseling, and job training. Based on the survey results, a high percentage of participants (93%) felt that there is a need for youth programs here as youth drug smoking is rampant and obvious. The youth population is also rapidly increasing and community agencies should pay special attention to the youths in Kensington – Chinatown area.



THOUGHTS

As a newcomer from China, I have been living this area for more than four years. I have seen the changing trends in this community and experiencing my friends move in and out for various reasons. I also cherished the life stories of the long – term residents whom shared their joys with me. I am proud of my Kensington – Chinatown neighborhood.

There are challenges that municipalities, community institutions and local residents must be prepared to address to ensure a safe and healthy area for current and future residents. It has been many years already, newcomers have been chosen this area as their first home to taste how Canadian life looks like. Therefore, helping them fully adapt to the Canadian environment is a part of local community agencies' mission. They can bring long-term residents and newcomers together as a practical way to build the stronger community, refine and reinforce efforts, and initiate more collaboration in the future to enhance their positive impacts within the community. As a result, the Kensington-Chinatown neighborhood will remain as a historically important area, a vital tourist area and most importantly, a safe and welcoming community.



APPENDIX

QUESTIONS FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

1. If a family you knew wanted to move into this neighborhood, what advice would you give them?
2. What would you say are the strongest and best qualities of this community? What are some of the good things about living in this community for you? (You may want to consider social, spiritual, political, economic or other aspects of life here).
3. Think about the problems you see in the community. If you had the power to solve three problems in this community in a short time what problems would you address?
4. What do you think are the three most serious needs of this community? What would you say are the main barriers of dealing with these needs and issues?
5. If you were advising a group interested in improving the health and well-being of this community, what are the three things you would recommend they focus on?
6. If you were returning to this community after 15 years in another country, what would you like to see changed, and what would you like to see the same?
7. In your opinion, what is a healthy community?
8. What are the indicators that a healthy community is in the making?
9. In order to prosper a community, we should build a solid foundation, and what do



you think are the key elements of that foundation?

10. How to measure the progress?

APPENDIX OF SURVEY RESULT