The Community We Want:
2012 Weston Mount-Dennis
Survey Results

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Executive Summary

The Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF) coordinated this survey in partnership with various residents, community partners and volunteers in February of 2012 in the Weston/Mount Dennis community in Toronto, Ontario. The survey was prompted by the desire of LEF, businesses and other organizations in the Weston/Mount Dennis community to gain a better understanding of community trends, needs, gaps and strengths. The objective of the survey was to engage community members to identify issues that are common priorities, and determine opportunities for economic development including identifying business trends and emerging markets for products and services.

University of Toronto student volunteers administered the 11-question survey in person using paper questionnaires. Over 250 surveys were completed over a 3-day period at a variety of locations throughout the Weston/Mount Dennis community.

The survey questions were designed to identify community trends and priorities, services that are needed but not available in the community, the community's challenges, and collect feedback on strategies for economic development. The responses resulted in a number of interesting themes including community pride, community challenges and needed services.

Community pride was expressed when respondents were asked of the first word that comes to mind when they think about their community. This question garnered double the amount of positive responses as negative ones and common responses reflected pride in diversity, general pleasant characteristics, and how the community is improving, as well as reflecting the challenges that were identified in other sections of the survey.

The most prevailing challenges identified by the survey were crime, lack of employment opportunities, poverty, and access to housing, health care and other services. Crime was prioritized as the top community challenge and the crime rate was identified as the most important factor for respondents to continue living in the area. Employment opportunities was the second most frequently identified community challenge and the forth most important factor when deciding to continue to live in the area, gaining fewer responses than friendly neighbours and the cost of housing.

The survey responses indicated a number of services that are needed, but available in a limited way in the community including shopping, food, recreation, health care, arts and culture, community activities, and transit. These needs are also reflected in responses to what would help the economy in the community as the top choices were developing shopping areas, building recreation facilities, developing independent business, and developing transit and housing.

The survey has demonstrated some clear community priorities and ideas for promoting economic development, and will be useful in promoting collaborative

action in these areas. The prioritized issues and ideas are complex and will require integrated long-term solutions, however a few immediate actions are recommended. These include:

- Expand programming with the police such as Justice Circles to improve communication and trust between residents and police officers, and work towards long-term solutions for crime reduction and community safety.

- Increase advertising of community services and events as many of the services and events that were identified as lacking do exist in the community, signifying a need for greater information about these services.

- Attract services that are lacking in the community including pharmacies, dentists, fitness centres, and movie theatres by advertising the lower rental rates for commercial properties, the potential customer base from new transit projects and a community with clientele ready to support new businesses.

- Support the development of retail stores by expanding supports for local entrepreneurs.

- Develop a community brand to encourage economic activity.

Going forward it will be essential to take a collaborative community-wide approach to these challenges and recommendations.

Introduction

During the University of Toronto (U of T)/Learning Enrichment Foundation's (LEF) Alternative Reading Week (ARW), 100-150 university students went into the Weston/Mount Dennis community[1] to speak with community members. Through this process they collected more than 250 surveys. The survey was designed to better understand the community challenges people felt were most pressing, the opportunities they see in the future, and the current needs that are perceived to exist in the community. The survey concludes with some basic demographic data, so that we could understand the cross section of people being surveyed. This included age and length of time spent residing in the community.

[1] The Weston/Mount Dennis community encompasses roughly Weston Road and the surrounding streets from slightly north of Lawrence Avenue to slightly south of Eglinton Avenue.

The Survey

This survey was conceived of in early 2011, as LEF was thinking of ways to engage U of T students in a community-wide project that was not housed at LEF, nor directed entirely by LEF. The survey was developed at LEF, in consultation with community members. (The full survey is attached as Appendix A.)

The survey was the byproduct of work being done by the Mount Dennis Weston Network. A series of discussions in mid- to late-2010 indicated interest in a survey of community businesses to develop a greater understanding of the types of businesses that exist in the community, the gaps in services or products available, and the local employment opportunities that exist. While this survey of local businesses did not reach completion at that time and the capacity to continue this is limited, it did spawn the idea of a broader community survey.

The intention of this community survey was to speak with citizens from across the community, with one of the objectives remaining around gaining an understanding of business trends or clusters of professional expertise that could be marketed to a wider audience. If a trend were to be identified, there would be the potential of developing a community brand to market and grow the trend. This would be similar to communities such as the Castlefield Design District which has marketed itself as having a number of design companies and being open to designers and contractors. This niche has allowed particular communities to expand and flourish.

The survey was conducted in the neighbourhoods of Weston and Mount Dennis. Throughout the report the neighbourhoods are referred to Weston/Mount Dennis, although we acknowledge that these are distinctly different neighbours. While these are distinct neighbourhoods there are many commonalities and the two are very interconnected. This report is an attempt to speak to those common threads across the broader community, while continuing to understand that they are distinct.

Though LEF did champion this survey in terms of development and some leadership, the entire community shares the survey. Community members were involved in the development of the questions, as well as the administration of the survey with U of T students across the Weston/Mount Dennis neighbourhoods.

Process

As one of the projects of the ARW, U of T students were invited to participate in the community survey. This project was advertised to students using the following description:

> "The Weston/Mount Dennis community is one that experiences a number of challenges, but also has strong, resilient community members and resources. We are conducting a survey that will allow the community and LEF to better understand the challenges and gaps, as well as the community strengths.

Students will have an opportunity to engage with the community by having our neighbours complete surveys."

This attracted, more than 100 students, across four project time slots and three days, as well as three student leaders, one LEF leader and one community leader. Students spoke with community members at the following locations:

- Outside of the shopping centre at Weston and Albion
- Outside of the shopping centre at Jane and Trethewey
- At LEF's weekly market
- At Unison Health and Community Service's Hub location
- At the LEF Youth Centre
- Along Eglinton Avenue and Ray Avenue on Weston Road
- At the Weston-King Neighbourhood Centre, where some students served meals and other students spoke with clients about the surveys

Students also connected with business owners along Weston Road.

In many of the locations students were not only surveying community members, but were engaged in activities. This was true of students at the LEF Youth Centre and Market, Unison's Hub, and Weston-King Neighbourhood Services. This allowed students to not only speak with community members about the survey, but also engage with them in various ways.

The time slots that students surveyed the community members were set by the parameters of the ARW, which meant a limited amount of time to engage community members for the purpose of the survey. The times included: Tuesday February 21, 2012 2:00 – 6:00 pm, Wednesday February 22, 2012 1:00 – 4:00 pm and 5:00 – 8:00 pm, and Thursday February 23, 2012 1:00 – 4:00 pm. Within the confines of the ARW program, these were the times that could best match community schedules. In the past we have operated the ARW in the morning and afternoon, with students leaving LEF by 6:00 pm. This past schedule would not have allowed student to meet organizations or community members when they are available, due to employment or program operation times.

Challenges with Process

Though there were several challenges administering this survey, we were able to collect many surveys and gather interesting and relevant information from the community. Among the challenges were advertising, student direction and leadership, and representative sampling.

With regards to advertising, we could have alerted the broader community to the survey in advance; if people were aware of this piece of work, as well as why and how it was being conducted, a greater number of responses may have been garnered. However, advance advertisement of the survey might have given respondents a

chance to filter their responses; instead, community members were not informed of the process and we received people's initial reactions.

Further, the students needed more explicit directions, including a greater understanding of why we were conducting the survey and how the information would be used. This would have better allowed students to speak to community members about this piece of work. As students did not have all of the details of the intent of this work, some community members were wary of sharing their views.

It was intended that students could help individuals fill out their surveys, which would have allowed more questions to be answered according to their intent. While this did happen with some surveys – and there were some community members who wished to complete the surveys themselves – assistance was not provided for all surveys. This was particularly troublesome for those questions that asked people to choose 2 or 3 options only, as in some cases people chose additional options. However, time did not allow us to review all questions with the student volunteers, the reasons for asking them, and other details of this work. As it stood, students generally knew why we were doing the survey, a profile of the community and how to communicate with community members, but we were lacking information that could have prepared the students to better support those completing the surveys.

Another challenge was the number of leaders associated with this project. We could have used more project leaders to go with groups of students to the various locations. The survey was one of the most challenging ARW projects to date; we asked students to go into a new community and ask strangers to complete a survey, which is never a simple task. We now know that students could have used more general training on how to interact with community members, as well as a project leader who was readily available to provide support and answer questions.

Because of the nature of the survey, it is not a truly random sampling of the community. First, we received a number of surveys from people who were not local, possibly because they were shopping or accessing services away from their homes. Students should have been directed to ask if people were local and collected surveys from only local community members. Further, the respondents were a self-selecting group comprised of people who stopped to respond to the survey. Thus, while we obtained responses from a good cross-section of the community with respect to ages, genders, and involvement and length of time in the community, further study would be required to determine if results can be generalized to the community as a whole.

Furthermore, throughout the report there are references to community members. The phrase community members is used to refer to the survey respondents, and not all community members. As the survey is a small sampling of the whole community we recognize that the views presented may not represent all in the community.

While we did encounter these challenges, we still managed to collect more than 250 surveys from people from a variety of geographical neighbourhoods around the

community. At the end of the project, students recounted stories of positive interactions with community members and felt that this was a great opportunity to immerse themselves in a community. Many community members were also happy to share their opinions and knowledge of their neighbourhoods. The community response was a concern, as the community members have been through many surveys and consultations. A few responses to the survey reference their dissatisfaction with constant consultation, but see little resulting action from this work. Overall we have heard positive comments about this process and hope that community members can see how LEF and other community groups and organizations respond to the findings.

While there are always opportunities to improve a project of this magnitude and many things to learn from this activity, we know that we have gained valuable information and created an important educational opportunity for the students involved.

Results

The total number of surveys completed was 259. The results from the survey came in two forms. The first is the formal answers to the questions we asked community members. The second is the answers written on the side of the page, which may or may not directly correspond to the questions that were asked. These more informal answers provide valuable information and ideas about challenges in the community, as well as thoughts on how the community can move forward.

Individual Question Results

Street Name

The first question was meant to ask people to list the street name where they live. Overall this was a poorly answered question with some people putting their own name in this space, others putting their current location and some using their address. Out of 259 surveys only 171 included a street name. The highest listed street names were Weston Road, the intersection of Weston Road and Lawrence, Jane Street, and Industry Street. Due to a lack of clarity about what information we were trying to collect, the information collected for this question is largely irrelevant. We know that those saying Industry Street were mainly done at LEF, while those completed at Unison say Jane Street. Beyond this we do not have a clear sense of whether people filled out their home address or the address where they were completing the survey.

In the future with such a question, we would clearly state which address we wanted reported and also better share this with those administering the survey.

First word or phrase that comes to mind when thinking about the community you live in

This is the question that yielded the most variety in answers, showing the diversity of views of the community. This question was intended to discover whether there is a community brand or focus which could be marketed beyond the community. Rather than uncover a brand, this resulted in a number of very polarized answers including such responses as “safe” and “unsafe”, “quiet” and “noisy”, and “bad area” and “good place”. The answers are demonstrated on the cover of this document in a Wordle. Wordle is an online platform that allows a user to submit a series of words and this is returned as a word collage. The larger the word the more times it was repeated. This tool can be found at wordle.net (Feinberg, 2011).

The words were grouped according to group categories, including positive, negative, resources available and other. While these have been categorized into mutually exclusive categories, it is possible that another individual would group these differently, interpret the meanings of the words in a different way or have words grouped in multiple categories. (All of the words are list in Appendix B)

Within the positive category, there are many words that meant similar things and these have been grouped into the following:

- Words about diversity (Multicultural/multiracial, diverse, etc.) were written 16 times
- Words that were generally positive (nice, good, polite, like, etc.) were mentioned 40 times
- Words that positively describe aspects of the community (quiet, peaceful, good community, safe, etc.) were stated 41 times
- Words about improvement (getting better, potential, etc.) were stated 5 times

In addition there were a number of words that were positive that did not fit into any group such as “kids”, “health”, “live”, “home”, “family”, “progressive” and “people”.

Within the negative category are similar groupings including:

- Words about crime and safety (not safe, dangerous, drugs, etc.) were stated 17 times
- Words that were generally negative about the community (bad, dirty, dislike, etc.) were stated 26 times
- Words related to poverty (poor, destitute, needy) were listed 10 times
- Words about neighbourhood decline (getting worse, falling on hard times) were mentioned 6 times
- Words related to a lack of services (lack of employment, no service, boring) were referenced 6 times

In addition there were a number of negative comments that did not fit into the above categories, including: “traffic issues”, “poor standard of living”, and “depressed because oppressed”.

The resource category encompassed fewer responses, but reflects a wide variety of services, shops and infrastructure. This list includes: transportation, parks, the Coffee Time, dollar stores, police, churches that are community oriented, youth and seniors programs, community supports for those in need and there was a mention of a greater need for childcare in community spaces.

The final list was everything that was not covered in one of the other categories. This list was quite short as most of the words and phrases fit into the above categories. This category included: “The community is big”, “how can the community be made better for me”, and “the community is changing”.

Some of the words that have been categorized could be interpreted as falling into other categories. What has been interpreted as positive in this report could, by another, be interpreted as negative. Such words include ‘busy’ which was categorized as negative but could have been seen as positive. Despite such potential

inconsistencies, categorizing the responses does give an overall impression of the types of responses.

Work done by Success Beyond Limits, in the Jane-Finch neighbourhood shows how perception of a community from inside can vary widely from outside perspectives. They asked people from inside the community to submit words they felt described their neighbourhood. These words included: resilient, diverse, misunderstood, vibrant and many more. Similarly those from outside of the community were asked to submit words. These words included: crime, rough, isolated, fear and more. They organized these into two Wordles to visually demonstrate the diverse views held of this community. This activity with the words collected in this survey may reveal similar results, if we also had a pool of words from outside the community. Given that comments deemed to be positive numbered 102, whereas comments deemed negative numbered 55 we can see that there were far more positive comments about the community from within the community.

What services do you need and are unable to access?

People answering this question could select as many options as they wanted, and results reflect the percentage of total respondents who indicated each choice. (See Appendix C for the graphed results.) The top ten services (in order) that people feel they are unable to access were:

1. Recreation Services - 40%
2. Arts/Culture - 38%
3. Community Activities/Clubs and Organizations - 37%
4. Emergency Care - 31%
5. Health Care – doctor/health clinic - 30%
6. Libraries - 28%
7. Childcare - 27%
8. Local Government Officials - 27%
9. Dentists/Eye Care/Other Specialists - 26%
10. Food/Groceries - 24%

None of the items in the top 10 are surprising, especially as there are a limited number of health clinics and professionals available in the local community. Further, there are no recreation facilities in the community, which is an amenity that community members desire. This can also be seen in the question about what people leave the community for or would access locally if available, and in the question about economic activity. Currently the Mount Dennis Library is undergoing a renovation, which means the nearest library to the Mount Dennis community is the Weston library. This means for many there is not a library within a reasonable walking distance. There was a suggestion in the survey that the mobile library come to the Mount Dennis community to make up for the current lack.

The deficits that the community perceives in these areas could speak to an actual deficit in the community, such as a recreation centre. However, this could also represent a need for greater promotion of those activities, programs, and resources that are available in the community. The response to this question speaks to a need to attract these resources or better advertise where these are available in the community.

To further understand this question about access to services, the results of the survey were divided into demographic groupings, including age, gender, length of time people lived in the community and those that are involved in community organizations. However, this revealed that each grouping's results were similar to the overall result with the major needs being recreation, arts/culture, and community activities/clubs/organizations. The results could be further grouped into Recreation Services or Activities, Services (including childcare, access to local officials, libraries), Health Services and Access to Items for Purchase. Whether divided across demographic groups or for the entire pool of surveys, we see that recreation is the primary item that community members feel they are unable to access. This is followed by health and other services which had very similar numbers, and then access to other items for purchase.

One of the issues with this question was the use of the term "churches", rather than religious institutions. Many people wrote beside this option or included in the "Other" section options such as temples and mosques.

<u>What are the largest community challenges in your opinion?</u>

It was requested that those answering this question select only three options from the given list. This was because people could feasibly select all of the items in the list, which would give us very little information regarding priority challenges. Although there were still respondents who selected more than three options, there was a clear hierarchy of perceived challenges. (See Appendix D for the graphed results.) The ranked community challenges, beginning with the biggest challenge and the percentage of respondents who selected the option, are as follows:

1. Crime - 58%
2. Employment Opportunities - 55%
3. Poverty - 44%
4. Housing - 41%
5. Newcomer/Immigrant Supports - 29%
6. Educational Attainment - 18%
7. Access to Services - 17%
8. Isolation - 17%

While all of the above items are the focus of various community groups and government agencies, crime, employment and poverty have been a central focus. Much of this focus increased with the priority neighbourhood designation which

brought more resources, like police and city committees to look at these issues. These challenges have also long been the focus of organizations and residents across the community, with many looking for innovative solutions.

When looking at these results across age, gender, time lived in the community and participation in local organizations, there is near agreement about crime, employment opportunities, and poverty being the largest community challenges.

What items or services do you leave the community to access?

This question was left open-ended, so that participants in the survey could write in all items that they needed to leave the community to access. The responses to this question varied, although we attempted to group these into categories. The following is a ranking of the grouped items people felt they needed to leave the community to access beginning with the most mentioned:

1. Healthcare (family doctors, specialists, dentists, labs, clinics, pharmacies, mental health services)
2. Food (restaurants, grocery stores)
3. Shopping
4. Work and Volunteer Opportunities
5. Recreation/Arts (after-school programs, theatres, clubs)
6. Education
7. Libraries
8. Government Services (passport office)
9. Social Services (social workers, senior services, assistance services, food banks)
10. Transit
11. Other (legal services, banks, religious institutions)

This question and the following question were designed to understand the gaps that people experience in trying to access necessities and comforts. The following question allows us to understand if people would use the above-mentioned services if they were available locally. These questions can serve as a guide for those who are developing local enterprises or services, or entrepreneurs looking to develop local businesses. (A full listing of items people leave the community to access is included as Appendix E.)

If available near your home, what types of items would you purchase 3-5 times a month that is not already available in the community?

As with the previous question, the responses to this question varied, although we attempted to group these into categories. The following is a ranking of the groupings of items people felt they would leave the community to access a few times a month from those most mentioned:

1. Shopping (Wal-Mart, clothing and shoes, books, movies, kids supplies, electronics, hardware, cosmetics, cigarettes)
2. Food (groceries, affordable, organic options, nice fruit and vegetable, culturally relevant options)
3. Recreation/Arts (gym, swimming lessons, cinema, dance clubs, children's activities, parks, arts and culture)
4. Health Care (access to medication, health workshops)
5. Transit Passes/More Access to Transit
6. Libraries/Social Services/Educational Supports/Work (homework help for children, job fairs)
7. Other (laundry facilities, religious institutions)

The above represent opportunities for organizations, entrepreneurs and businesses or the city to invest in supports for the local community.

There were a large number of people (46 respondents) who indicated that access to groceries, food and restaurants did not currently meet their needs. People either are looking for more diverse options or more affordable options, although there are also a large number who simply want things to be more accessible, as stated through comments. Those who are interested in more accessible shopping wanted a variety of items, with clothes and shoes, books, nearby malls or department stores, electronics, and movies or movie rentals being the most repeated answers.

The other options were listed far fewer times by survey respondents, with access to recreation being the next most common. Those looking for recreational activities had a far more diverse list, than most categories including access to children's programs like swimming facilities and lessons, movie theatres and dance clubs, gyms and recreation centres, and parks.

By providing greater access to many of the above listed items, this community could become far more livable. Development of such services could also provide a boost to the local economy. (A full listing of the items people listed is included in Appendix F.)

<u>Which of the following do you believe would help the economy in the community? (Choose one)</u>

For this question, we asked people to select only their top choice, as this could give us an idea of the most important initiatives to move forward with in the community. Again, while people selected more than one, there was a strong hierarchy of options. (See the graphed results in Appendix G.) The following is the ranking of the options, with the percentage of respondents who selected each option:

1. Develop Shopping Areas - 38%
2. Build Recreation Facilities - 33%
3. Develop Independent Business - 29%
4. Increase Transit - 27%

5. Build Condominiums or More Housing - 27%
6. Improve Road Ways - 27%
7. Use Public Funds for Business Incentives - 24%
8. Industrial Development - 21%
9. Other - 4%

This list signals the need to attract business to the local community, which was also echoed in the previous questions about what people leave the community to purchase or what people would purchase locally if available. Similarly, based on the number of people leaving the community for recreation or willing to access this locally, these results speak to a need to have this available locally. Recreation facilities could include a city run physical activity centre, and could also include businesses such as a health club, a movie theatre and spaces for children's activities.

An interesting trend that comes from this question is the lack of demand for industrial development. Respondents seem to prefer having access to services and small business rather than local industrial development. While it is possible that we did not have a wide enough range of people, as much of a survey was done during the day, it is also possible that this result is due to the new reality of the labour market. Increasingly jobs, particularly manufacturing jobs, have left the Weston/Mount Dennis community in the last 30-40 years. In the past there were many local factories that employed many community members and provided a thriving local economy. With the trend toward manufacturing moving out of the country, the community lost much of its manufacturing base. Today there are only limited local opportunities for moving into this type of labour locally. This would mean that most of the younger respondents in particular, do not see those types of opportunities as a feasible career path. These positions also require higher levels of education and training than in the past, which has not been accessible to many in our community. Compared to the City of Toronto as a whole the York-South Weston community (riding in which Weston/Mount Dennis is situated) has a 30% post-secondary completion rate, compared to 49% for the city. In addition in the York-South Weston area 33% have less than a high school education, compared to 20% for the City of Toronto (Canadian Mothercraft Society, 2008).

When looking at these results across age, gender, time lived in the community and participation in local organizations, the trend of the overall data is followed by the various demographic groups.

<u>What is important for you to continue living in the area? (Choose two)</u>

We requested that people only select two options from this list, as this list has many positive characteristics and people could select them all. While some people selected more than two options, this list points to significant reasons for people to continue living in the area. (See the graphed results in Appendix H.) The following is the ranked list of reasons people thought were important to continue living in the community with the percentage of respondents who selected the option, from most cited:

1. Crime Rate/Public Safety - 49%
2. Friendly Neighbours - 43%
3. Cost of Housing - 40%
4. Employment Opportunities - 33%
5. Quality Schools - 32%
6. Family in the Area - 26%
7. Environmental Quality - 22%
8. Business Opportunities - 17%
9. Local Tax Rate - 12%

While many people indicated great regard for the community on the side of the survey page beside this question, there were a handful of people who indicated that they would leave if it was possible (often not an option due to finances) or were looking for other options for housing and location.

Since crime rate was listed as the most important item from this list, this is an area that needs focus. While this is an area that has many organizations (police and affiliated units, community groups and agencies, youth organizations, etc) working on the issues, it may be time to think about alternative solutions and collaborative work to have an impact. Changing the perception of the community is also an important step in community development, as media has often focuses on violent crime, with less mention of the local vitality and resources.

By coming together as a community around one issue such as crime and public safety, we can have a positive impact upon the various reasons that people live and stay in a community.

Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that friendly neighbours were an important factor in their decision to continue living in the community. Reduced crime and increased public safety – and/or the perception of this – could be an impetus for community members to engage more comfortably and often with their neighbours. This could create a positive feedback cycle in which increased positive interactions with neighbours leads members to feel safer, which in turn encourages more neighbour interaction. Such interactions would further encourage community members to stay within the community.

When looking at these results across age, gender, time lived in the community and participation in local organizations the trend of the overall data is followed by the various demographic groups.

<u>How long have you lived in the community?</u>

As we asked people many questions about what they would like to see in the community and how they feel about the community that they live in, we believed that it was important to know how long people had lived locally. The largest number of people surveyed had lived in the community for more than 10 years, with the next

largest group having lived in the community 1-2 years. (The graphed results of this question are available in Appendix I.) Further, this question allowed us to explore whether any of the above questions were answered differentially according to the length of time respondents had spent residing in the community. Although there were no distinct differences between the various lengths of time lived in the community.

What kinds of groups are you involved in, in your community?

Judging by the results of this question, Weston/Mount Dennis is a highly engaged community, with many involved in community volunteer activity. (Full graphed results in Appendix J.) Out of the 259 people surveyed, 160 people, or 62%, said they volunteered in at least one organization. Further, of those volunteering, 54% (or 33% of all surveyed) are volunteering in more than one organization.

The most common volunteer activities were in churches and schools, with a smaller but significant number of respondents volunteering in other charitable organizations. In addition to this, more than 10% of respondents are engaged in youth groups, civic, service or fraternal organizations, neighbourhood associations and other organizations.

While this information seems quite positive, it may also indicate that people are engaging in organizations or in volunteer work as they are unable to find paid employment. This points to an ability to gain experience in the community through volunteer work, although we want to ensure that community members are able to translate this into meaningful employment

Although these numbers may point to challenges around employment, this level of activity is something to celebrate, to encourage for others and to promote widely.

Demographic Questions

To understand the people whom we were surveying, we asked some basic demographic information of people. The two questions we asked of people were age and gender. (Graphed results of these questions can be found in Appendices K and L.) The highest number of respondents were female, and aged 20-29, followed by 30-39.

Comments on the Side of the Survey

In addition to the information that we received from the questions we asked in the survey, there were also comments written in the margins. These comments (with the number of such comments) have been categorized into:

- Crime/Police/Security (16)
- Housing (12)
- Transportation (11)
- Local Business/Economy/Employment (10)
- Access to Services/Community Space (9)

- Recreation (8)
- Education (6)
- Shopping (5)
- Health (4)
- Food (3)
- Environment (3)
- Poverty (1)
- A number of general comments (8)

The full listing of the comments is included in Appendix M.

Many of these comments support the findings from across the survey. The comments about recreation include wanting a local gym and more activities available for children. This has been a major theme across the survey.

The comments on crime include both positive and negative views of the police and their task forces, and acknowledgement of issues of gun violence, drugs and youth crime. Some people also feel that the community is unsafe, with certain respondents wanting to leave the community and no longer taking walks in the neighbourhood.

The comments about health are all about health services being inaccessible in the community, with people having to travel downtown or wait a long time for service. This was also a theme that has been strongly stated throughout the survey. This perception again points to a need to better promote local services and to understand what type of local services are available. West Park Healthcare Services operates locally and was recently accepting new patients, although we need to look at how to best promote this across the community.

There were many comments about transportation that were focused on the challenges of poor roads, traffic congestion, lack of pedestrian crosswalks and a need for bike lanes. Some also felt that Metrolinx was unhelpful and the new transit project was not needed in the community. The comments about Metrolinx seem to be in response to feeling as though things are happening *to* the community, rather than *with* the community. One quote, “Metrolinks is unhelpful. They take out properties and tear down houses,” indicates that at least one person surveyed feels like this agency is acting without consulting the community. This sentiment was echoed by a student’s report that at least one community member would rather not fill out the survey, as it will not make a difference anyways. This points to the concern of over-consulting the community, without having corresponding actions and results from such consultations, or community views are not taken into consideration when making community changes.

People overall commented that housing was too expensive for what was available and that wait lists for affordable housing were too long. A number of resources lacking were also cited: temples and mosques, pharmacies, a library, mentoring programs,

and education and social services. People also indicated that food banks, bakeries and bigger restaurants are necessary. Shopping venues were also mentioned, including department stores and modern amenities like Starbucks and cinemas. There was one comment that there are too many dollar stores in the community.

There were also comments that more educational opportunities are needed like ESL programs and adult upgrading programs. Furthermore, people wanted to ensure that there were high quality local schools and recognized the challenge of higher educational attainment (post-secondary) for local people. There were also comments about the local environment including concerns about the health of the environment due to former factories. People thought that greater focus on environmental development could help the local economy.

There were a number of comments about the local economy, employment and businesses. These included comments about:

- Industrial development improving the economy
- New opportunities and training for newcomers and those with disabilities
- Higher wages being needed
- A need for more local jobs
- Supports for entrepreneurs, particularly for young people

A few people said that they were trying to move out of the area. There were also comments about community challenges like the issues of two many people in a small space and too many buildings too close together.

These comments add greater voice to the community survey, as it was mainly checked boxes. While the comments were not solicited and not anticipated when the survey was developed, these added an important element to the results, and allowed for a variety of community voices to be present.

Major Themes

There were several themes which arose through the survey. The themes include challenges in the community, and services that people would like to access or are unable to access. In addition to these throughout the survey there was an overall theme of appreciation for and pride in the community.

<u>Challenges</u>

The question about what the largest community challenges are and what is important to staying in the community reveal what community issues are of most concern to our neighbours, and what could help to draw more people to the local area. Below is a discussion of the most highly ranked challenges.

Crime: The Toronto Star's interactive map of where police have laid criminal charges in the years 2009 and 2010 show that the Weston/Mount Dennis community

(represented by the City of Toronto Police Division 12) has among the highest rate in the city, with a particularly high number of violent crimes. Based on survey results, people perceive crime to be a major local challenge, an impression that is perhaps exacerbated by the news coverage (Hidy et al, 2012). This was highly visible with the coverage of the Summer of the Gun in 2005, with many shootings taking place in the West End of the city. This coverage and reputation have been challenging for this community to shake, despite the overall reduction in crime across the City of Toronto.

While the statistics have improved and some of the outside perception of the community is exaggerated, crime and public safety continues to be a real concern. People indicated that both crime and public safety were community challenges, and both are considerations for people to continue living in the area.

Employment Opportunities: According to 2006 City of Toronto census data for the ward of York-South Weston, the unemployment rate was 5.9%, compared to the rate of 5.0% for the city as a whole. Further, the 2006 rate for sales and service in the York-South Weston community was 27.2%, compared to 22.8% for the City of Toronto (City of Toronto Demographics, 2008). In addition to these statistics, there has been a substantial decline in manufacturing jobs and local businesses since the 1970s. There is also a high turnover rate among many of the local businesses, which means that there are few opportunities for employment locally. As many people are forced to leave the community for employment, they are less likely to spend their income locally, and more likely to have additional travel expenses.

Employment opportunities were listed as one of the most important reasons to stay in the community, as well as one of the top community challenges. While the intent of the survey was not to explore ways to improve the local economy, many of the highest chosen options on other survey questions would have an effect upon local labour, include more independent business, and developing shopping areas.

Without local employment opportunities few changes can occur in the community, as reviving a local economy can contribute to poverty and crime reduction.

Poverty: Poverty was listed as one of the largest community challenges in the survey results. This is something that has been widely recognized by individuals, community organizations and even at the City level. The Weston/Mount Dennis community was designated a priority neighbourhood by the United Way of Toronto and the City of Toronto in 2005 through the Poverty by Postal Code Report, along with 12 other Toronto neighbourhoods. These were designated based on concentrations of poverty and other community challenges, such as lack of access to services, ailing infrastructure and crime. The 2006 census data revealed a rate low income of 29.7%

for economic families in Mount Dennis and a rate of 30.0% for Weston[2]. Further, the percentage of renters spending 30-99% of their income on rent was 40.5% for Mount Dennis and 43.5% for Weston (Social Policy Analysis and Research, 2008). The priority neighbourhood designation and statistics indicate a high incidence of poverty across the community, which can contribute to higher than average crime rates. While local and regional organizations, along with the city are working on ways to improve these numbers we continue to see a high number of community members struggling with poverty and the associated challenges.

With the release of the 2011 census data in late 2012 we will have a better understanding of the effect of the resources that have been contributed to the community. Unfortunately for those who live in the community and work with community members, we know that far too many people continue to struggle with poverty and other challenges each day.

In addition to these community challenges, respondents indicated that friendly neighbours and the cost of housing were important for continuing to reside in the area.

Needed Services

In addition to challenges discussed above, there were many areas of the community where people would like to see growth. This could be seen in the question about services that people are unable to access, items people leave the community to access, items people would purchase if they were in the community, and changes that people feel would help the local economy. The following developments or services were those most prevalent throughout the results.

Recreation Facilities/Services: The former City of York has never had a recreation facility, as they had a relationship with the local school board prior to amalgamation giving community members access to these spaces after school hours. With amalgamation, education for the city fell into either the Toronto or Toronto Catholic District School Boards. This meant that there were rental costs implemented for after hours school use, and therefore a sharp decline in the use of these facilities. There has long been a site chosen for a more local community recreation centre at Black Creek Drive and Eglinton Avenue, but the community continues to await this development. This facility would respond to people's desires for a local swimming pool and lessons, more recreation activities for children, youth and adults, and sports activities.

Beyond city-run space, community members are also looking for more available fitness gyms, and dance clubs. In general, respondents were interested in having services that are available for young people and adults.

[2] The term "economic family refers to a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related by blood, marriage, common-law or adoption." (Statistics Canada, n.d.)

This was also one of the items that respondents thought could improve the local economy. Recreation facilitates could draw people to the community, provide local employment opportunities, and provide outlets for youth and adults.

Arts and Culture: The amount of interest in arts and cultural activities was surprising, with this being the second most frequently chosen service that people were unable to access and many people listing this as both something that they leave the community to access and would access if it were available locally. This category includes theatre, cinema, entertainment generally, and children and youth activities.

The focus on this and recreation activities/facilities indicates that these are a priority and there is a demand for people to access entertainment locally.

Shopping and Food/Groceries: The Weston/Mount Dennis community has few options for shopping and accessing food and groceries. While there are many convenience stores, dollar shops, and a number of restaurants, (particularly Caribbean restaurants), there are few other options. Among the services or shopping destinations respondents indicated they would like to be able to access are more restaurants, department stores and malls, clothing and shoes, coffee shops, and grocery stores. While many indicated through the survey that they were looking for "cheap" or affordable items, there were also many looking for more specialty items. The specialty items included culturally relevant foods, higher end clothing options, organic body products, health food and medicines, and specific shops such as Starbucks. Importantly, people also indicated that they want to be able to shop near their home, without long commutes or walks for the items that they both want and need. A couple of parents indicated that pushing a stroller or walking with children to amenities was challenging, and other respondents indicated that they were looking for items that were within walking distance.

Trinity College students through U of T completed a report in 2011 about food deserts with a focus on the Weston/Mount Dennis community (Trinity College Working Group, 2011). This report indicated that while there are a number of convenience stores, there are few options for groceries. The problem of convenience stores for purchasing groceries is that they are often more expensive, as they purchase smaller quantities and can carry far less fresh produce due to cost and volume of movement. The closest large groceries are Food Basics at Jane Street and Alliance Avenue and No Frills at Black Creek Drive and Eglinton Avenue. Both grocery stores require a long walk or commute for many community members. Further, the No Frills sits at the bottom of a hill, along a very busy intersection, making it less accessible, particularly for walkers, for those with strollers, or during the wintertime. Due to these challenges, neither affordable groceries nor stores with a range of options are easily accessible to the whole community.

Without these resources in the community, people leave to make purchases. This means that they are forced to drive or commute to consume items that they would

purchase if they were locally available. For many people, this also means that they are forced to do without items they would otherwise purchase locally, including healthy food options like fresh produce. Finally, this means that local residents are investing money outside of the community, rather than supporting their local economy. While this does not sound like a positive situation, it does present an opportunity for local business development and investment.

Health Care: In the question about services people are unable to access, as well as the question about what people leave the community for, there were a large number of people who indicated that health care access was a concern. This includes access to: doctors and health clinics, pharmacies and prescriptions, mental health services, dentist/eye care/other specialists, medical labs and emergency care. There was also one person who indicated challenges with accessing buildings and transit due to lack of supports or accommodations for those with disabilities. While many communities do not host facilities like hospitals or specialists, this community is struggling with a more overall lack of access to health supports.

South of Lawrence Avenue, there is a stark lack of medical supports, meaning that people must travel for even prescriptions. The few resources that are available are limited, not accepting patients or people are not aware of these services. For those who choose to forego access rather than travel, small ailments become much larger before they are addressed, and regular check-ups, which are an example of preventative care, can be neglected. This can result in long-term health concerns for the community, as well as higher long-term costs to the health care system. This could be further exaggerated due to the lack of healthy local food options, and high rates of poverty.

Services: There were also a number of other general services which people felt were lacking in the community. These included libraries, childcare, and local government officials and offices. Currently the Mount Dennis library is under construction which means that there is a lack of access for many in the community. One suggestion to remedy this is to have the book mobile come to this community.

The challenge with childcare in this community is that there is under-subscription to current programs. The lack is not actually childcare spaces, but access to childcare subsidies. The Weston/Mount Dennis community is over-subscribed to subsidy, yet still has open spaces if families are able to pay for their care. The current subsidy wait list is more than two years in length, which means families are unable to access care, even though there are childcare spaces. Even with more childcare centres in the community, this would not necessarily increase access to those that do not have the income to pay the high fees required.

Many also indicated that they felt that they did not have access to local government officials and offices. The local politicians are highly engaged in community activities, but they are also very busy which can then result in seeming less visible in the

community. Better advertising of where their offices are located, when they will be at events and how to contact them may make them seem more present in the neighbourhood.

Access to government offices, like Service Ontario kiosks or passport offices, is a challenge in many communities, as many of these offices are centralized and there are only a few across the entire city. Greater sharing of knowledge around means for accessing these remotely (i.e. online, by phone) could limit the number of trips people are required to take to these sites and generally increase knowledge. This knowledge sharing is already occurring in the community, in settlement agencies, social service offices, in employment resources centre and in other agencies across the community. Better advertising of this support should be ensured, so that people are able to gain knowledge of navigating government resources.

Community Pride

A final overarching theme which is present throughout the surveys is one of belief and pride in the community. While there is an understanding of the challenges that exist locally, there were a vast number of comments in the first question, “First word or phrase that comes to mind when thinking about the community”, about the strength, possibility and appreciation of the community. Further, throughout the survey there were many places where people wrote that they had everything that they needed available to them. This shows an incredible resilience across this community and a strong vitality which is not always visible from those outside of the community.

These themes cut across the questions in the survey. Many of these interact and there are a number of ways that these are being addressed and many innovative ideas that can be applied to these themes.

LEF Response to the Findings

LEF has worked over the past several years to gather much information about the community, so that we could continue to support and be responsive to the needs of local agencies, community groups, and residents. In the past LEF has surveyed our community childcare centres, childcare staff, training clients and others to better serve their needs. Like this past research this survey has once again confirmed much of what LEF knows, although the depth of challenges is always unanticipated. Further, we were impressed with and appreciative of the level of information community members were willing offer.

LEF has compiled a wealth of data about the local community and has worked to respond to these needs. In the last five years we have started many new projects and initiatives, which have been shown through the survey to continue to have relevance. These projects include:

- 1267 Weston Road Youth Centre and Community Store Front: In 2008 LEF opened our Youth Centre at 1267 Weston Road. This provided a more visible presence for LEF in the community, as well as a space for youth programming and gathering, community events, and activities. In the four years that this site has operated, it has offered programs for youth ranging from magic, to camping trips, to snowboarding, to film clubs and youth entrepreneurship. The activities at this location are grounded in the community and supported by local youth, agencies from across the community, community members and government.
  We have been fortunate to be able to share this space with the community for programs such as parenting groups, the Craft Divas and community meetings and events. This is a space with ever-changing programs that we expect to continue to evolve with the needs of the community.

- Childcare: LEF has a long history of offering childcare to the former City of York. We acknowledge the need for this service in allowing parents to access employment. Our programs mainly serve those accessing childcare subsidies through the City of Toronto. This means that most of the families accessing our programs are struggling with the challenges associated with poverty. To combat these challenges, and help parents build relations and break isolation, we have developed particular supports for parents through our centres. Further, as childcare is one of the earliest supports for children besides their parents, we want to ensure that they have the most preparation to excel in school and beyond. To achieve both the goals of supporting parents and their children, we have developed the following resources:
  - Literacy Curriculum - Our literacy curriculum is grounded in a number of early development tools, as well as informed by the Early Development Instrument (EDI). The EDI is a tool for measuring school readiness among senior kindergarten children. With this curriculum we are

ensuring that the children of our community enter school as prepared as any in the City of Toronto.

- Engagement of Parents - We have also worked to engage parents in activities at the childcare centres through such events as parent meetings, parenting workshops, field trips, BBQs and annual events like our Jamboree. By doing this work, we are hoping that parents will build relationships of trust with one another, where they are able to rely upon others for supports such as childcare, ride sharing, picking up or dropping off children at the centre, meals together or shared family activities. Through this we can reduce the isolation that parents may feel; if parents have greater support this can also reduce their general and time stress.

- LEF 116 Industry Street Location Renovation: From 2009 to 2010, LEF's 116 Industry Street location underwent a massive renovation. We transformed our fairly traditional warehouse building with sales offices at the front of the building and a large cafeteria-style room as our only gathering place in the back. In looking at our space and thinking about the feelings people got when they entered our building, we began to understand that these did not match our mission and values. With much support, including the first U of T Alternative Reading Week students, we converted the back of our building to accommodate a 15,000 square foot Town Square and moved all of the offices to the back of the building, creating an open meeting space at the front of the building as well. Not only is this now one of the largest gathering places in Weston/Mount Dennis community, but it is creating opportunities for people to come together and break social isolation. This space is being used now for graduations, celebrations, conferences, community gatherings, jobs fairs, other agency events and our daily lunch. This has created greater vibrancy at LEF and a space for people to connect in the community.

- Weekly Market in the Town Square: In April 2011, we had our first Market in the Town Square. We knew from our childcare centres, from operating our fee for service kitchen and from community members that accessing food in the Weston/Mount Dennis community can be challenging, as there are few readily available, affordable and healthy options. To address this challenge, as well as the lack of time many experience, we opened a fruit and vegetable market at LEF. We have expanded to include freshly butchered chickens, done by our Cook's Training class, and once a month honey and honey products from the Toronto Beekeeper's Cooperative. We are also looking at including more entrepreneurs in the future. This market has met particular needs of those attending workshops or courses at LEF, although it has not attracted as many people from the community at large. We are looking at expanding to our 1267 Weston location in the future and also drawing more people to 116 Industry Street by expanding the number of vendors. Through this market we have

worked to provide culturally relevant options and local produce, while also delivering information about healthy eating.

- 116 Industry Street Bicycle Program and BIXI Maintenance: The Weston/Mount Dennis community was the home of CCM Weston Factory, including bike manufacturing, until the closure of the factory in the 1980s. While the community was the home of one of Canada's most iconic bicycle and sports equipment companies, it does not house a visible cycling community, with few bike lanes, paths or shops. Partly as a nod to this history, and as a means for providing employment for local youth and adults, LEF launched the Bicycle Assembly and Maintenance (BAM) program in February 2009. The shop where the program takes place provides a safe training space for those learning about bike repair, as well as a place for graduates to volunteer and practice their skills, and a place for community youth to learn about cycling and gain repair skills.
  Further, in spring 2011, LEF was awarded the maintenance contract for the BIXI bike-sharing program which launched across the downtown core of Toronto. This has provided employment opportunities to those who have trained in the BAM program, and has brought a bicycle presence back to the community.

To continue to have an impact in the community, there are many new initiatives which we have very recently launched or are developing that also speak to the results of the survey. These include:

- Weston Wheels Youth-Led Bike Shop: To continue the work around bicycles, in March 2012 LEF and Toronto Police Service 12 Division, with several community youth leaders, launched the Weston Wheels Bike Shop at 1267 Weston Road. This youth-led shop currently operates weekday afternoon and Saturdays, with extended hours during the summer. This space provides youth with an opportunity to learn bicycle repair skills, as well as customer service and other business skills, and a range of other employability skills like communication, team work and time management. This space will operate through the bicycle season, providing those in the community with a local shop for bicycle repair and sales of used bikes.
  This new space responds to a lack of shopping options in the community, can increase the access to recreation activities, provides youth with an extracurricular activity and leadership opportunities, and helps to increase the economic development of the Weston retail strip.

- Self-Employment in LEF Training Programs: LEF has noticed a shift away from traditional employment opportunities, with an increase in those jobs that are more entrepreneurial. This includes work that requires a person to have their own vehicle or other resources. Rather than be employed by a company, people are paid for work completed in a piecemeal fashion. The responses in

the survey about the lack of employment opportunities indicate that the community is also witnessing this shift in the labour market.
To prepare people for this new labour market, we are incorporating self-employment supports into our training programs. We started with our new Janitors, Caretakers and Cleaners program, but are also reforming our Early Childhood Assistant program and examining our other programs for similar opportunities.

- Emerging Entrepreneurs Initiative: In May 2012, LEF will launch its new entrepreneurship program. Unlike traditional entrepreneurship programs, this will focus on those individuals who are currently operating small home-based businesses. We want to provide people with the knowledge and support to legitimize these businesses, particularly food-based ones, and also increase the income that these enterprises provide. Although we hope that some of these businesses will grow to a scale where they support a family, we do not expect this to be the norm; however, we do expect that with supports these can augment family income and become less of an economic or legal liability.
  In addition to a short series of workshops for those who are part of this initiative, we will also be running an open series of networking events. We expect these events will draw entrepreneurs from across LEF and the community.
  The key difference between entrepreneurship programs and this initiative is the cooperative structure we are attempting to build. We expect that those operating these small businesses will work together to grow their businesses, and will also remain connected to this program and group for supports. We will also be providing the opportunity for food-based businesses to access our commercial kitchen, which will help ensure all food produced will fall under necessary health regulations.
  Through this program we expect to provide people with opportunities to increase their income, learn new skills and connect with a group of like-minded individuals. We also hope that some of these home-based businesses may also grow to a scale where they can provide their goods to the community or even open their own storefronts.

These initiatives are our response to what we have heard and seen in the community, as well as what we have learned from our research. The survey reinforces that we are on the right track, but as only one organization, we also know that there is much more that must be done to address the issues which people brought up in the survey.

Where Do We Go From Here?

LEF has found some ways to respond to the needs present in the survey, but it is clear that many of the challenges are beyond the capacity of one organization. Also, as the survey represents views from across the community, it is important that responses come from a wide range of community members and groups, agencies and organizations, and government. Not only is it necessary to have many voices and resources present, but there needs to be a coordinated effort across groups. Some of this is already occurring in the community, but there are many more opportunities to come together around initiatives, programs and events.

Recommendations

Better advertising of available services: The lack that the community perceives in community services could speak to an actual deficit in the community, such as a recreation centre. However, this could also represent a need for greater promotion of those activities, programs, and resources that are available in the community. This would also include the location and contact information of government officials' offices, as people felt that these were not accessible. In the past community networks and organizations have looked at organizing a comprehensive guide to programs, services and resources in the community. While some tools like this exist, these are quickly out of date, or are very broad (for example 211), going beyond the boarders of the community. If groups came together to build an online interactive guide this could be more easily updated, but may not be accessible to all community members, as a computer and Internet would be required. This task would also require some website development skills and time to build such a resource.

Attract services that are lacking in the community: The community does lack a number of services that people are required to travel to access. These include pharmacies, medical labs, dentists, eye care, fitness centres, movie theatres, arts/culture activities and more. While there are a number of services that people want in the community that would fall under the various levels of government (health care and hospitals, access to officials and offices, etc.), there are many more that could more easily be attracted to the community through a process of advertising the benefits of the community. Benefits include lower rental rates and property values, the potential customer base from the new transit projects and a community with a clientele ready to support new businesses.

Retail stores and services: The survey indicated that there were a number of people who would shop and use local services if these were available. This provides an opportunity to develop local enterprises or services, including social enterprises or to support and attract local entrepreneurs looking to develop local businesses. While these could include larger retailers, they could also include small, locally run businesses.

Programs with the Police: Crime and public safety came up as a challenge throughout the survey results indicating that this is an area that needs to be expanded upon. This can include activities where the police volunteer with children or youth, so they get to know these authority figures. This can help to demystify or eliminate negative preconceptions of the police, and build positive relationships. These types of relationships can have a profound impact upon those involved, police included, and can reduce crime in the future in a much more socially and economically positive way than the criminal justice system.

Justice Circles are another community opportunity that can be expanded upon to reduce repeat offences among youth and adults. Rather than traditional punishment offenders work with local officials like the police, as well as the victim of the crime to negotiate a community-based punishment. This is often for small crimes, but can have an impact upon rates of repeat offences. Community interventions may include repairing damage done, apologizing, or engaging in community activities. Training for this intervention has occurred in the community, so there are many able to support this alternative, community-based justice program.

Community Events: The local community hosts many events, although through increased advertising and resources these could be better attended and meet the demand for more community activities. This was among the items that people felt they were unable to access locally. Resources exist for community activities, including space, volunteers and other supports.

Community Branding: A community brand was one of the driving forces behind creating this survey. With the results of this survey, and other local knowledge that agencies and community member possess there is the possibility of identifying a local brand. This could encourage economic activity and provide local employment opportunities, both of which people indicated were necessary in the community.

Conclusion

This survey was an opportunity to learn more about what community members would like to see in their community and understand what vision people have for the future of their neighbourhoods. While we were originally aiming to identify a marketable community brand, we have moved from this goal to learning more about the community and considering new and creative ways to respond to the needs that were identified. While this shift occurred, this does not mean that identifying a brand is not still an important goal. This has been a means for promoting economic development in other Toronto communities and can have a similar result in Weston/Mount Dennis.

The results show that the community members surveyed are facing a number of challenges. Many of these are large and no one organization or solution can resolve these issues. These include issues of crime, poverty, lack of employment opportunities, lack of resources and services and challenges around housing. Despite these challenges this presents an opportunity for local organizations, community members and groups, and government officials to collaborate. There is the potential to find unique solutions to community challenges in partnership with those that live and work in Weston/Mount Dennis.

While the challenges presented seem daunting, there were equally uplifting elements to the survey results. Many surveyed did indicate that there are challenges in the community, but at the same time they demonstrated a dedication in and pride for the local area. This demonstrates a resilience and strength among community members, while contributing to a community vibrancy that is not always recognized by those outside of the community.

The results of this survey allow community interventions to be focused on those items that were identified as the largest priorities. Importantly, as many of the solutions can interact with multiple challenges, there is the potential to address many challenges through a few initiatives. These can be particularly effective with resources and supports from across the community and working through collaborative ways.

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Appendix A

Weston/Mount Dennis Community Survey for 2012 Alternative Reading Week

Street Name: _____

1. First word or phrase that comes to mind when thinking about the community you live in.
   _____

2. What services do you need and are unable to access (Check all that apply):
   a. Libraries π
   b. Parks π
   c. Health care – doctor/health clinic π
   d. Senior services π
   e. Police π
   f. Recreation services π
   g. Postal services π
   h. Local government officials π
   i. Food/groceries π
   j. Childcare π
   k. Mental health services π
   l. Dentist/eye care/other specialists π
   m. Emergency care π
   n. Prescriptions/pharmacies π
   o. Community activities/clubs and organizations π
   p. Shopping/restaurants π
   q. Arts/culture π
   r. Banks π
   s. Churches π
   t. Other (Please List) _____

3. What are the largest community challenges in your opinion? (Select 3)
   a. Crime π
   b. Educational attainment π
   c. Poverty π
   d. Housing π
   e. Access to Services π
   f. Isolation π
   g. Newcomers/Immigrant Supports π
   h. Employment Opportunities π

4. What items or services do you leave the community to access?

   _____

5. If available near your home, what types of items would you purchase 3-5 times a month that is not already available in the community?

   _____

6. Which of the following do you believe would help the economy in the community? (Top choice)
   a. Develop shopping areas π
   b. Develop independent businesses π
   c. Industrial development π
   d. Improve road ways π
   e. Build recreation facilities π
   f. Increase transit π
   g. Use public funds for business incentives π
   h. Build condos or more housing π
   i. Other: _____

7. What is important for you to continue living in the area? (Choose top two)
   a. Friendly neighbours π
   b. Family in the area π
   c. Crime rate/public safety π
   d. Quality schools π
   e. Local tax rates π
   f. Business opportunities π
   g. Cost of housing π
   h. Environmental quality π
   i. Employment opportunities π

8. How long have you lived in the community?

   _____

9. What kinds of groups are you involved in, in your community? (Check all that apply)
   a. Charitable organizations π
   b. Church π
   c. Civic, service or fraternal organization π
   d. Neighbourhood association π
   e. Political party π
   f. Schools π
   g. Youth group π

h. Other: _____

10. Age? _____

11. Are you? (Check One)

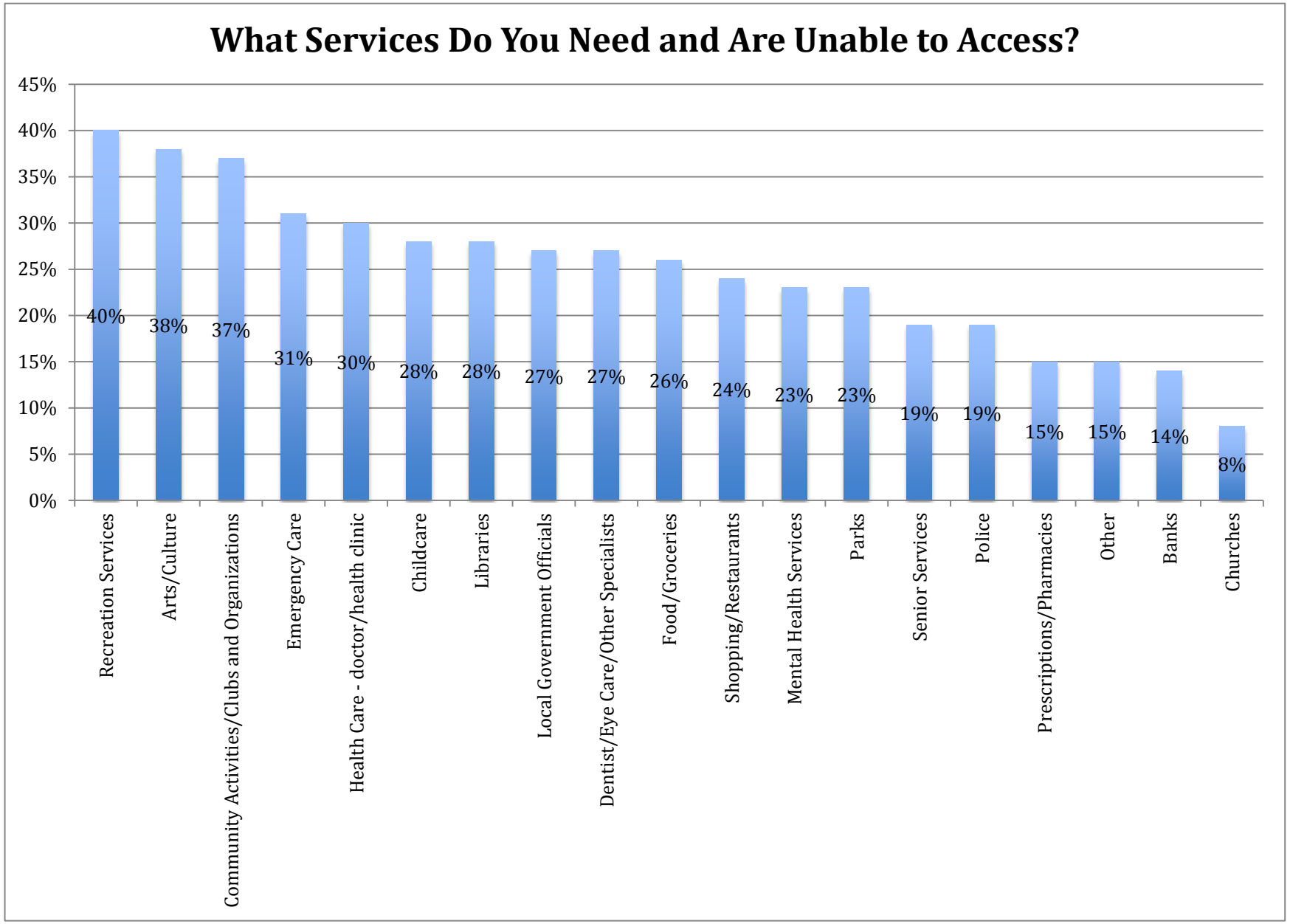
a. Female π
b. Male π
c. Other

Appendix B

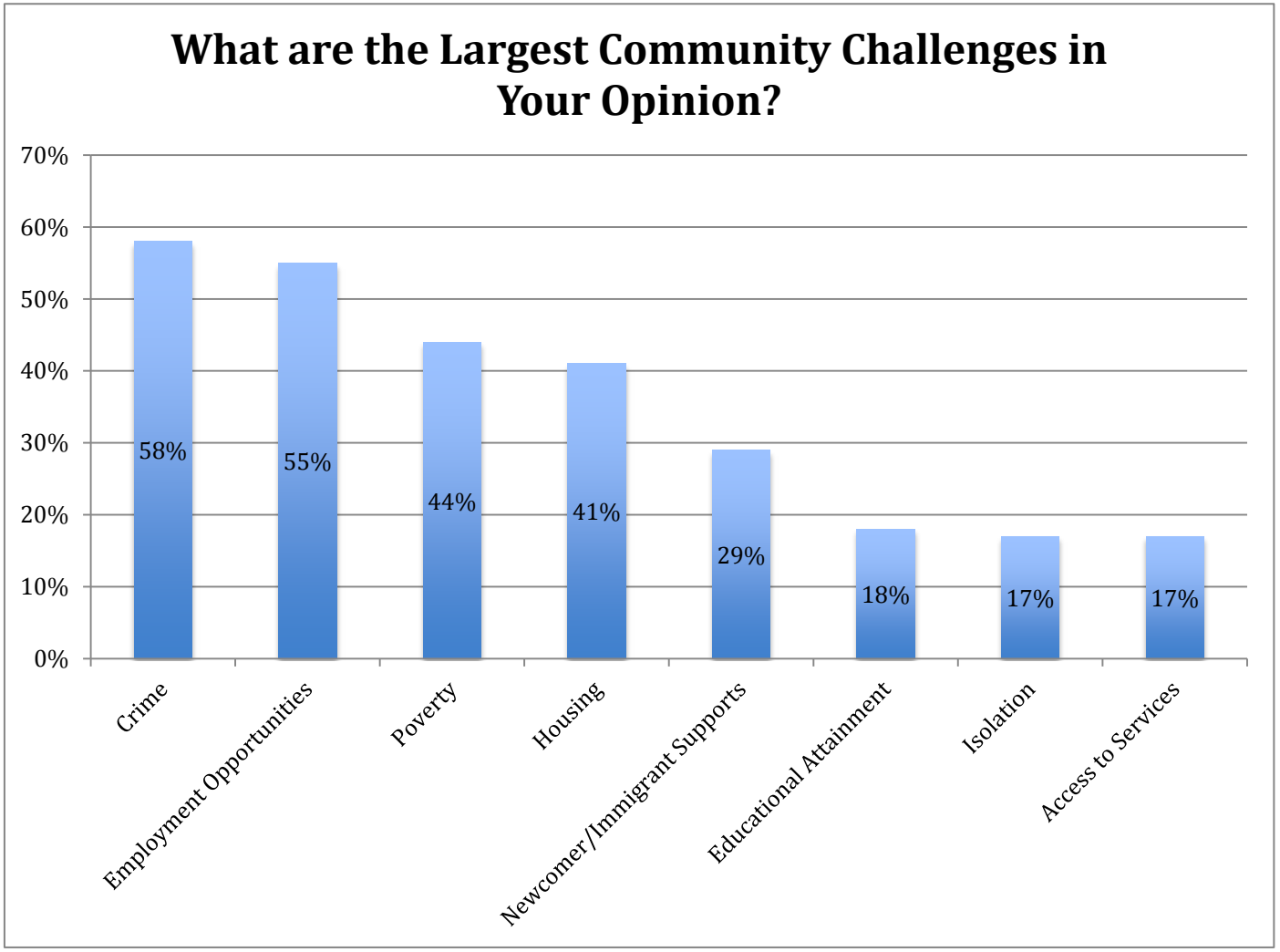
List of words or phrases people wrote.

Multicultural/Multiracial/ Diverse/Diversity (14)	Good/Good Place/Very Good Place (12)	Multicultural/Multiracial/ Diverse/Diversity (14)
Peaceful/Quiet (9)	Community/Good Community/Nice Community/ Neighbourhood/ Society (7)	Peaceful/Quiet (9)
Not Safe/Unsafe/ Dangerous (6)	Dislike/Bad/Not That Great/Bad Area/Not Very Good (5)	Not Safe/Unsafe/ Dangerous (6)
Police/Security/More Security (4)	Poverty/Poor/Destitute (4)	Police/Security/More Security (4)
Needy/Need (3)	Noisy/Noise (3)	Needy/Need (3)
Big/Many Buildings (2)	Boring (2)	Busy Traffic/Traffic (2)
Close To Most Services/Services/ Resources Available (2)	Coffee Time (2)	Expensive (2)
Falling On Hard Times/Getting Worse (2)	Ghetto (2)	Health (2)
Helpful/Supportive (2)	Life Style Improvement/Improve Lifestyle (2)	Love It (2)
People Place And Things/People (2)	Rundown (2)	Unity (2)
Violence (2)	Beaten Down (1)	Beautiful (1)
Black Community (1)	Busy (1)	Calm (1)
Churches Are Community Oriented (1)	Clean (1)	Comfortable (1)
Communication (1)	Community Businesses/ Telecommunications (1)	Community Centre (1)
Community Suppers For The Poor And Needy (1)	Crime/Stop Crime (1)	Deplorable In Some Areas In Regards To Standard Of Living (1)
Depressed Because Oppressed (1)	Dirty (1)	Dollar Stores (1)
Easily (1)	Enjoyable (1)	Family (1)
Fantastic (1)	Fights (1)	Freedom (1)
Full Of Possibilities And Safety (1)	Fun (1)	Garbage (1)
Great (1)	Happy (1)	Help (1)
Home (1)	Homeless (1)	How Can It Be Better For Me (1)
I Like My Community (1)	In A Bad Neighbourhood (1)	Indians (1)
Kids (1)	Lack Of Employment (1)	Live (1)
Mild (1)	Need Childcare in Community Centre (1)	Need For Peace And Unity (1)
No Service (1)	Normal (1)	Not Dangerous But Not Safe Either (1)
Not Right (1)	Not The Same/Changing (1)	Oh (1)
Old (1)	One Of The Good Places To Live In (1)	Parks (1)
Progressive (1)	Quality (1)	Quiet And No Crimes (1)
Resourceful (1)	Satisfying (1)	Spirit (1)
There Are No Words (1)	Too Much Problems (1)	Transit Line Construction/ Transportation (1)
Youth And Seniors Programs (1)		

Appendix C


What Services Do You Need and Are Unable to Access?
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
40%
38%
37%
31%
30%
28%
28%
27%
27%
26%
24%
23%
23%
19%
19%
15%
15%
14%
8%
Recreation Services
Arts/Culture
Community Activities/Clubs and Organizations
Emergency Care
Health Care - doctor/health clinic
Childcare
Libraries
Local Government Officials
Dentist/Eye Care/Other Specialists
Food/Groceries
Shopping/Restaurants
Mental Health Services
Parks
Senior Services
Police
Prescriptions/Pharmacies
Other
Banks
Churches

Appendix D


What are the Largest Community Challenges in Your Opinion?
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
58%
55%
44%
41%
29%
18%
17%
17%
Crime
Employment Opportunities
Poverty
Housing
Newcomer/Immigrant Supports
Educational Attainment
Isolation
Access to Services

Appendix E

List of items or services people leave the community to access. Number in brackets is number of times this was written.

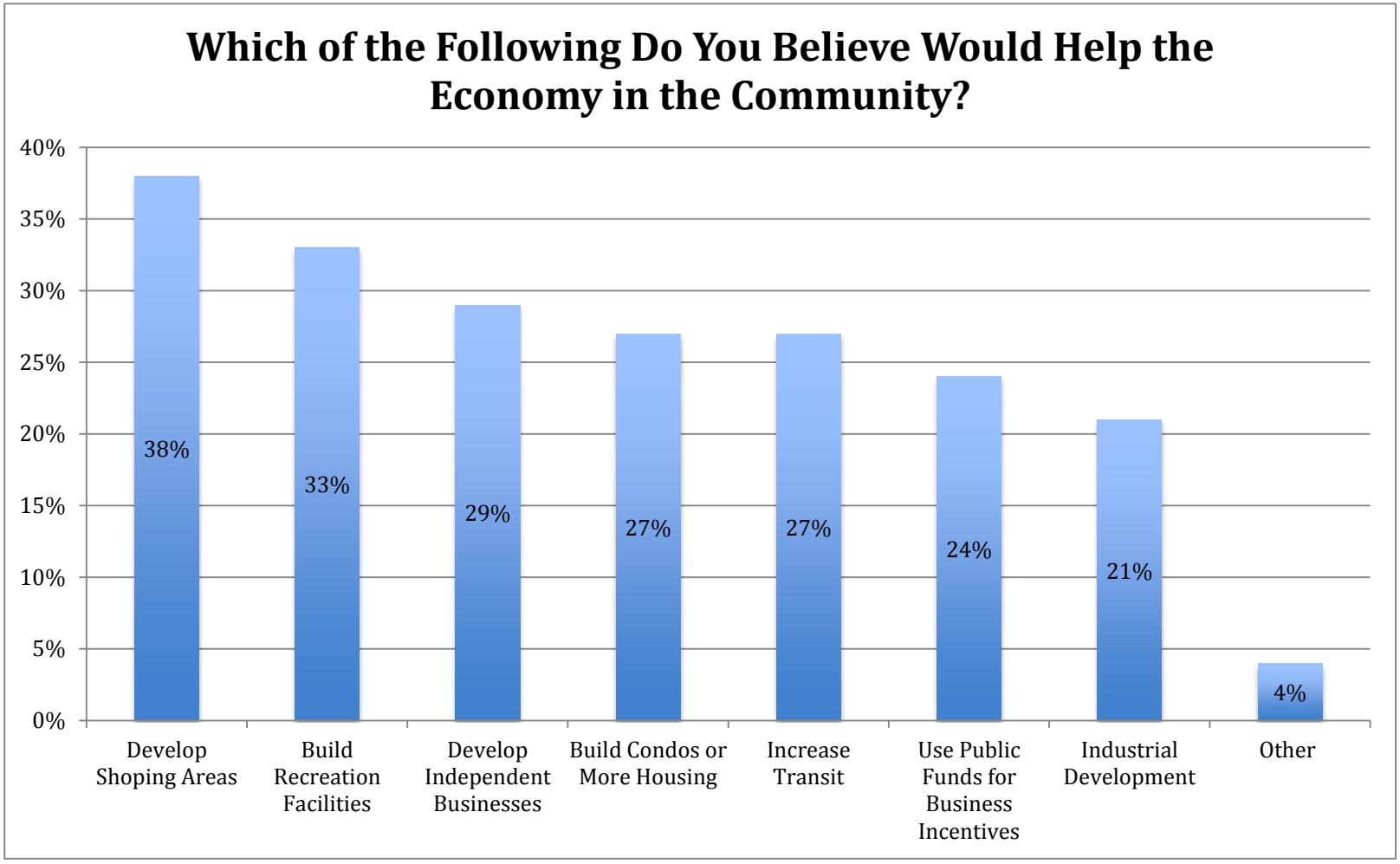
Doctors/Medical Specialists/Optometrist/Dentist (23)	Shopping (19)	Medical/Health Care (15)	Job/Employment/ Employment Opportunities (15)
Groceries/Food (Healthy) (11)	Library (9)	Schools/Education (8)	Restaurants (8)
Recreation (6)	Government Buildings/Offices/Services (5)	Pharmacies (5)	Clothing (3)
Movies (3)	Theatre/Movie Theatre (3)	Department Store (2)	Emergency Care/Hospitals (2)
Employment Services/Training (2)	Food Bank (2)	Passport Services (2)	Transportation/ Subway (2)
After-School Programs (1)	Assistance Services (1)	Arts/Culture (1)	Banking (1)
Business Items for Restaurant (1)	Childcare (1)	Church (1)	Club (1)
Coffee Shops (1)	Community Activities/Clubs and Organizations (1)	Computers (1)	Crime (1)
Cultural Food (1)	Entertainment (1)	Expressing Themselves (1)	Federal Government Services (1)
Gym (1)	Housing (1)	Internet (1)	Lab (Medical Testing) (1)
Legal Advice (1)	Medication (1)	Mental Health Services (1)	Most Services (1)
Organic Food (1)	Parks (1)	Police Station (1)	Postal Services (1)
Senior Services (1)	Shopping Centre (1)	Social Worker (1)	Social Workers that Help Newcomers or Seniors (1)
Swimming (1)	Ultrasound (1)	Vacation for Stress Relief (1)	Visiting Family (1)
Volunteer (1)	Walk-In Clinic (1)		

Appendix F

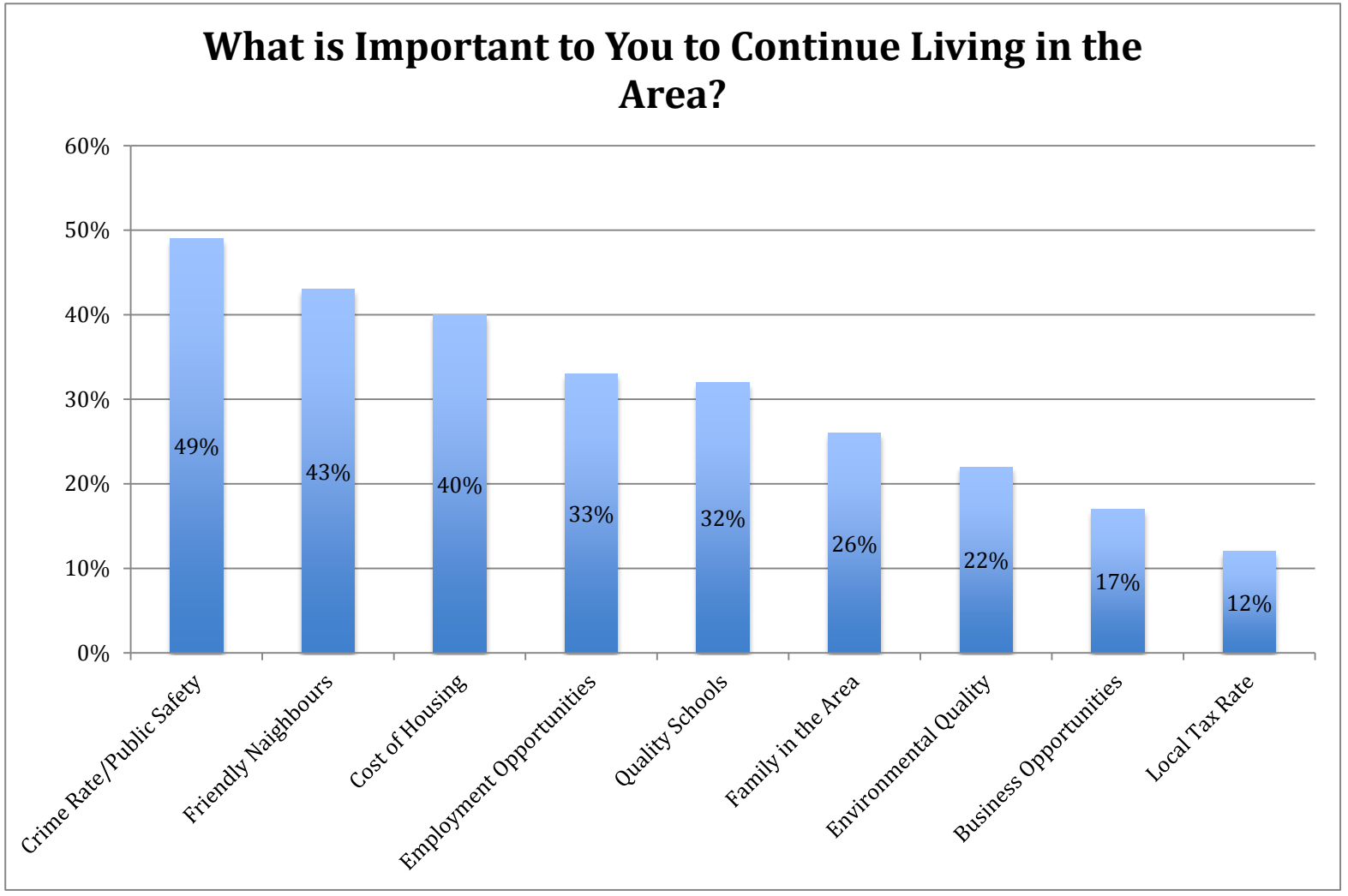
List of items people leave the community to purchase a few times a month. Number in brackets is number of times this was written)

Meat/Food (Healthy)/Groceries/Nuts/Nice Fruit (31)	Clothing/Shoes (16)	Medicine (9)
Books (8)	Restaurants (5)	Gym (Memberships) (4)
Parks (4)	Libraries (3)	Movies/Movie Rentals (3)
Organic Natural Products/Medicine (3)	Shopping Mall (3)	Shopping (3)
Swimming (3)	Cheaper Goods (2)	Cigarettes (2)
Educational Toys/School Items for Children (2)	Electronics (2)	Health Care/Store/Food (2)
Make Up/Cosmetics/Hair Products (2)	Theatre/Cinema (2)	TTC Bus Passes (2)
Activity Centre (1)	Childcare (1)	Christmas Tree (1)
Church (1)	Coffee (1)	Computer (1)
Costco (1)	Culture (1)	Doctors (1)
Employment (1)	Entertainment (1)	Ethiopian Food (1)
European Food Grocery (1)	Eye Drops (1)	Food Bank (1)
Half Decent Grocery Store with Reasonable Prices (1)	Hardware Store (1)	Health Centre (1)
Job Finding Fairs (1)	Laundry Facility (1)	Lunch (1)
Pharmacies (1)	Services for Children (Homework Club) (1)	Sports Activities (1)
Things That Help People Be Proactive About Health (1)	Transportation/Subway Station (1)	Video Games (1)
Wal-Mart (1)	Women's Health Workshop (1)	

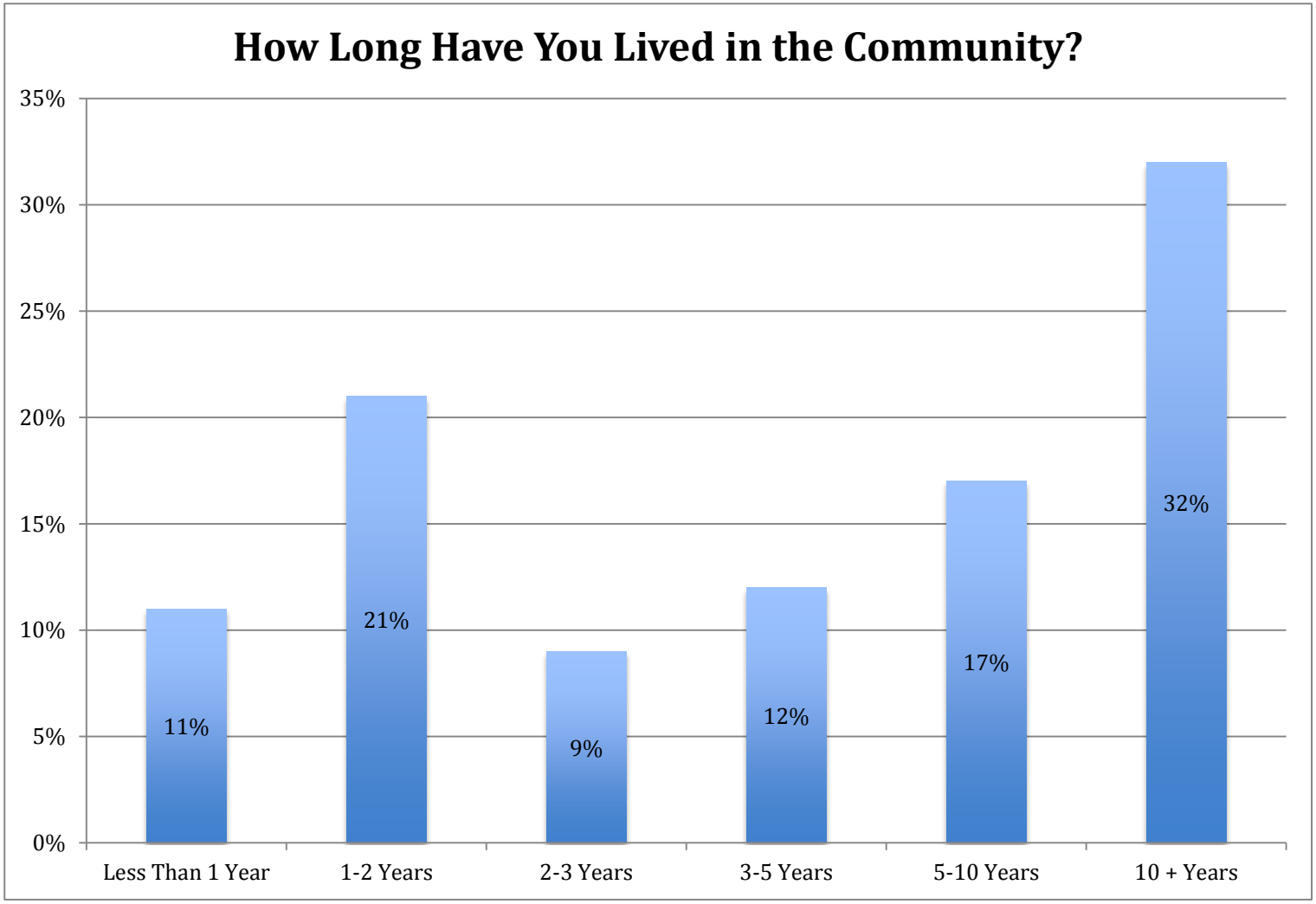
Appendix G


Which of the Following Do You Believe Would Help the Economy in the Community?
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
38%
33%
29%
27%
27%
24%
21%
4%
Develop Shoping Areas
Build Recreation Facilities
Develop Independent Businesses
Build Condos or More Housing
Increase Transit
Use Public Funds for Business Incentives
Industrial Development
Other

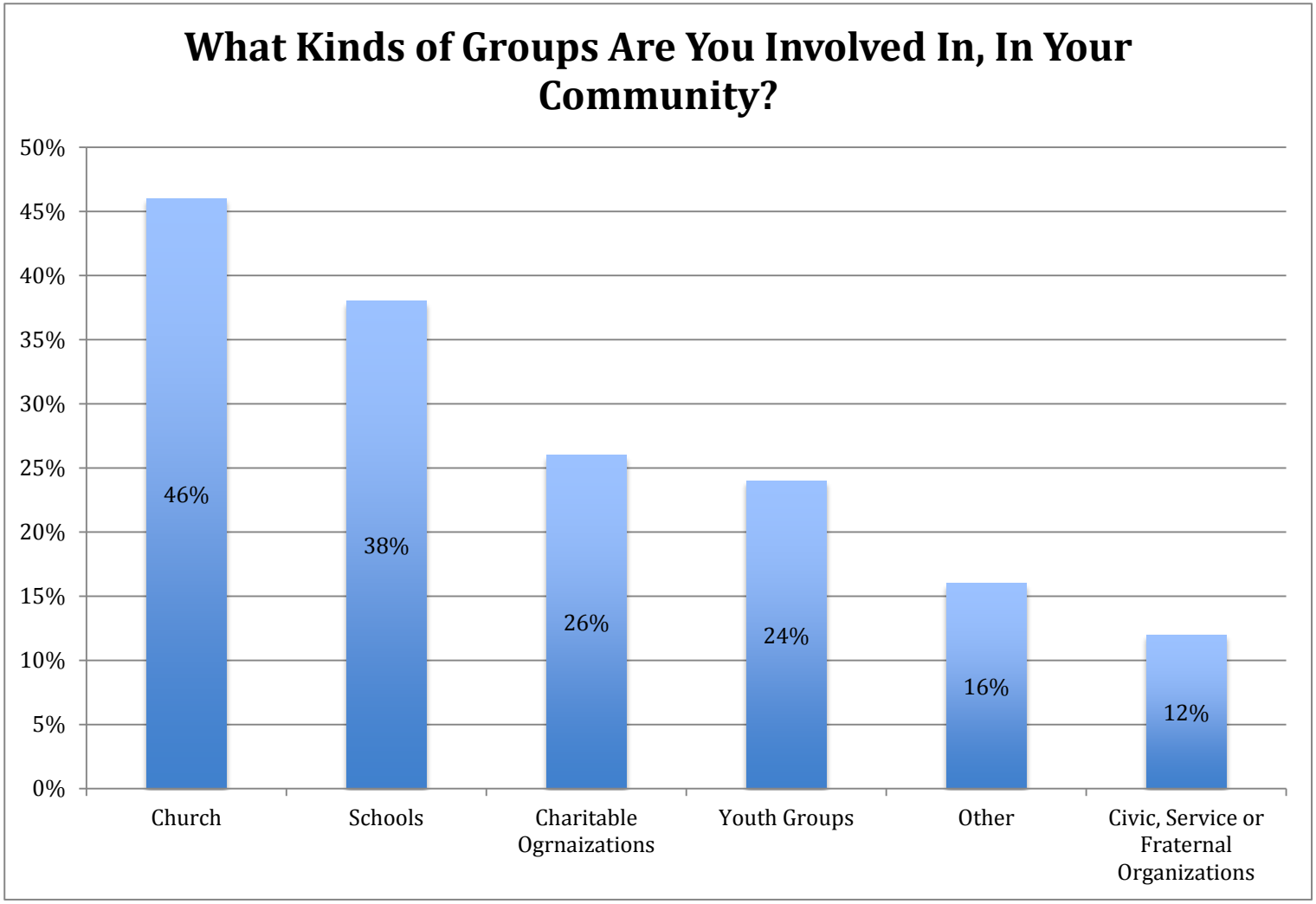
Appendix H


What is Important to You to Continue Living in the Area?
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
49%
43%
40%
33%
32%
26%
22%
17%
12%
Crime Rate/Public Safety
Friendly Naighbours
Cost of Housing
Employment Opportunities
Quality Schools
Family in the Area
Environmental Quality
Business Opportunities
Local Tax Rate

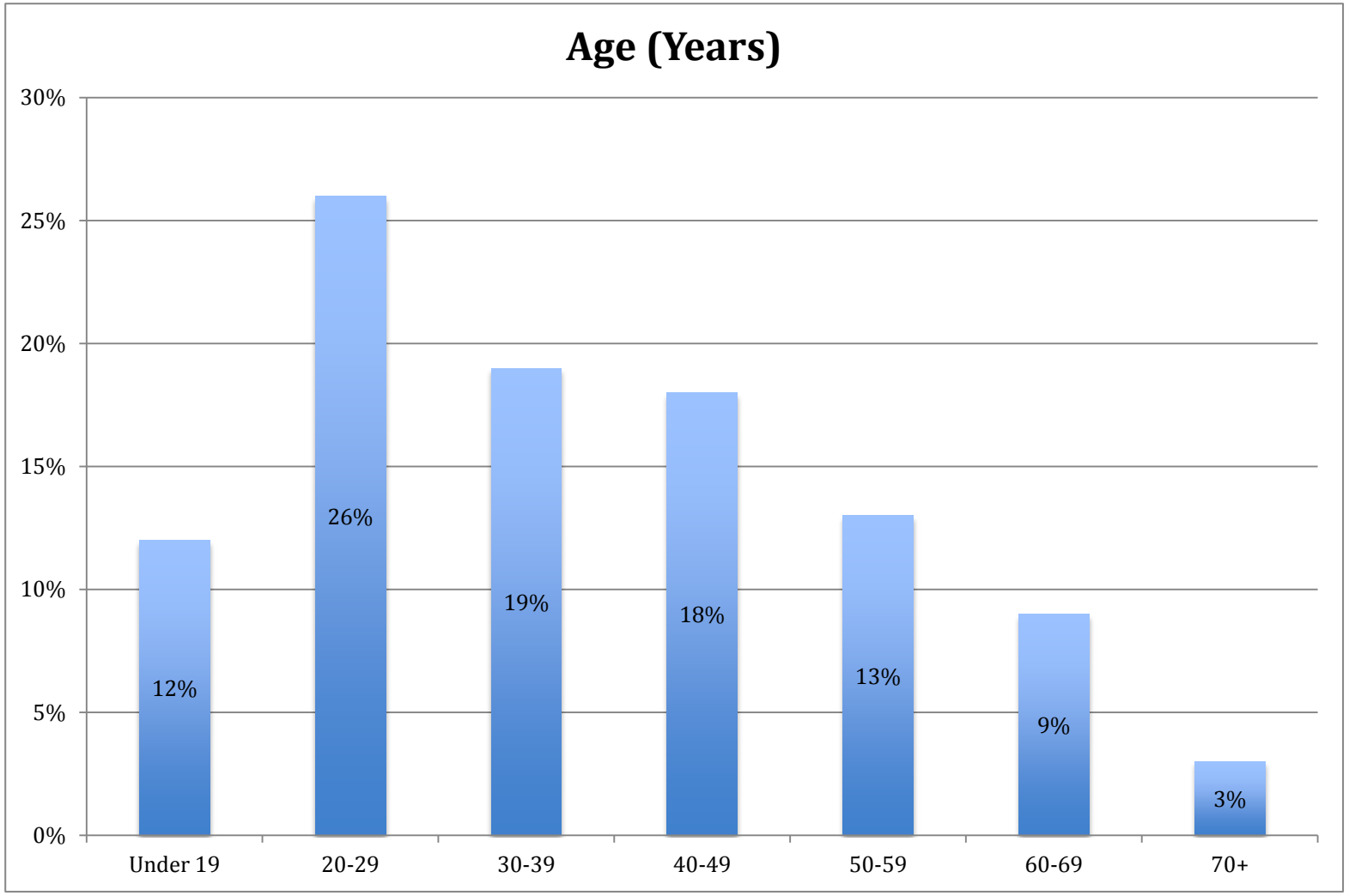
Appendix I


How Long Have You Lived in the Community?
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
11%
21%
9%
12%
17%
32%
Less Than 1 Year
1-2 Years
2-3 Years
3-5 Years
5-10 Years
10 + Years

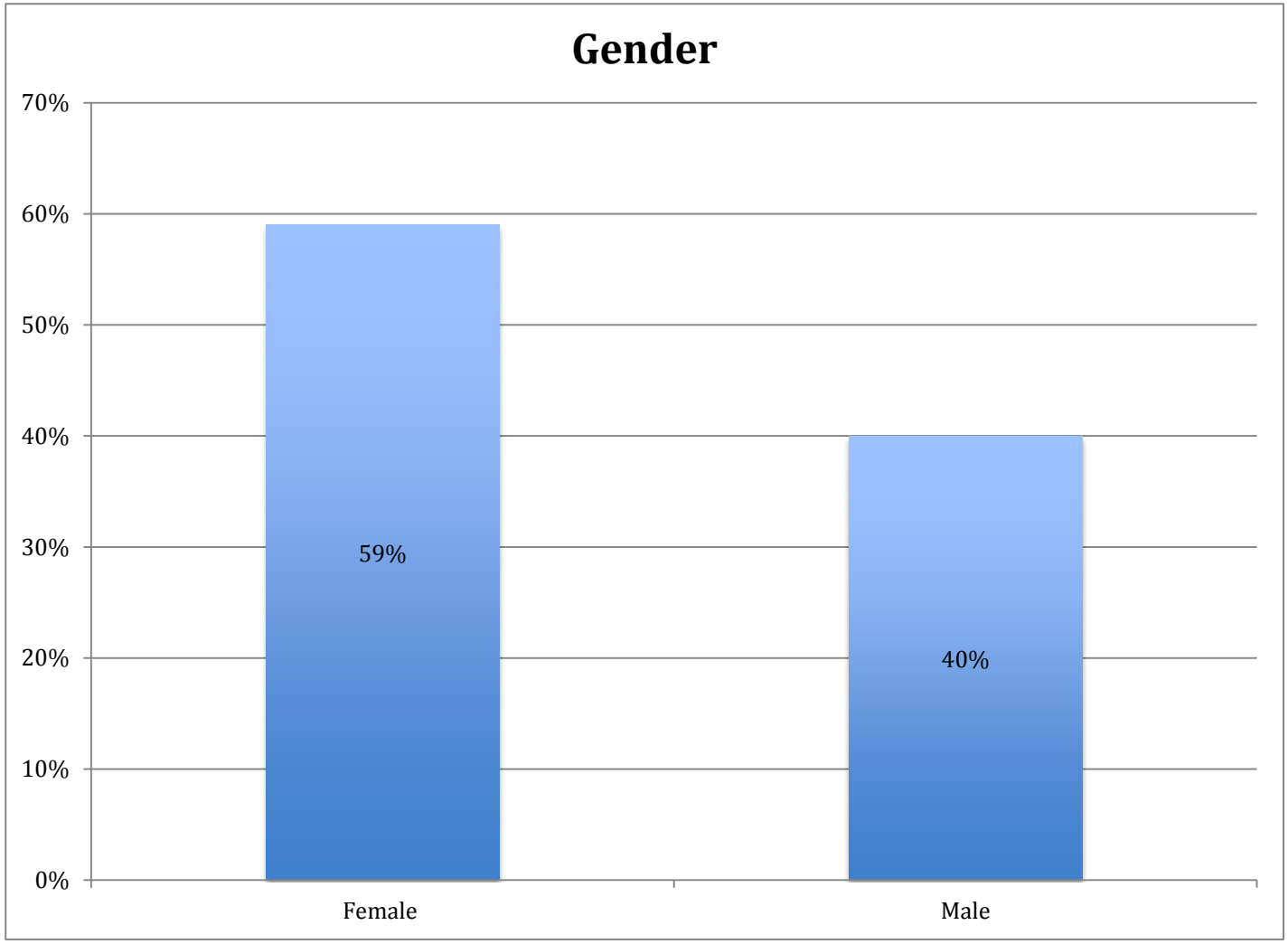
Appendix J


What Kinds of Groups Are You Involved In, In Your Community?
50%
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
46%
38%
26%
24%
16%
12%
Church
Schools
Charitable Ogrnaizations
Youth Groups
Other
Civic, Service or Fraternal Organizations

Appendix K


Age (Years)
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
12%
26%
19%
18%
13%
9%
3%
Under 19
20-29
30-39
40-49
50-59
60-69
70+

Appendix L



Appendix M

Notes on the side of the survey:

Recreation

- Gym within walking distance (3)
- Lack of available activities (2)
- Need more after school programs
- Need more activities for children (2)

Community Issues

- Too many people in a small area
- Too many buildings close together

Crime/Police/Security

- Police did not listen
- Drugs are a community challenge (3)
- Stopped taking nightly walks due to crime
- Not dangerous, but not safe either
- Somewhere I cannot wait to get out of
- Need better policing – especially for driving with a cell phone
- Issues of racism
- Youth violence a community challenge
- Security is a problem
- Police help out a lot
- Somebody got shot, maybe that needs to change
- TAVIS is a good presence
- Concern with court system and incidents of rape happening, concern that some accusation are false but result in unfair punishment nonetheless
- Gun control

Health

- Health care – building is not accessible
- Need to go downtown for medical specialists
- Emergency care is limited
- Only one walk-in clinic and always full

Transportation

- Metrolinx is unhelpful – they take out properties/tear-down houses
- Community doesn't need an airport link because people don't stop in the community/VIA rail not needed
- Too many parking spots, traffic congestion (2)
- Need pedestrian crossings
- Need roads fixed
- Need focus on pedestrians not cars
- Local traffic safety school closing
- With children walk to distant stores is inconvenient
- Need more transportation
- Need bike lanes

Housing

- Quality housing is too expensive
- Cheaper housing and assistance needed (shorter waiting periods) (6)
- Lot of work needed on housing
- Not enough housing on the market
- Need reduced rent/rent control
- No means of accommodation
- Need more up-to-date high rises

Access to Services/Community Space

- No temples or mosques
- Buildings are not accessible or wheelchair friendly
- Only one pharmacy
- Too many newcomer/immigrant supports

- Cannot access Somali community
- Weston/Eglinton library is being renovated, library near HL Alexander has been visited by the 'mobile', mobile should go to the Mount Dennis branch
- Community needs more volunteer opportunities
- Need education, social services, undercover cops, punitive justice system
- Mentoring programs

Food

- Need more food banks
- Need bigger restaurants
- Need bakeries

Shopping

- Want department stores
- Developing shopping areas is the most important
- Community is lacking modern amenities (Starbucks/Cinema)
- Too many dollar stores

Education

- Quality schools are out of the area
- Need more adult upgrading courses
- Need ESL programs (2)
- Challenge – secondary/post-secondary educational attainment
- Religious practices shouldn't be done in schools, no anthems are sung in schools

Environment

- Pollution – issue of living near companies/industry
- Environmental focus would help the community – barriers to future programs
- Environment improved but needs more development

Poverty

- Family only reason to stay in the community/do not have the means to move out

Local Business/Economy/Employment

- If we use public funds for business incentives people would misuse the money
- Industrial development top, as may create more jobs
- Economic development for handicapped for new skills
- New employment opportunities for newcomers to help local economy
- Low wages a community challenge
- Employment opportunities like Canada Post key to staying in the community
- To help economy provide jobs and reasonable rate of pay
- Develop young entrepreneurs
- Fund for 'small' business incentives
- Employment for youth
- Volunteer opportunities important to keep living in the community

General Comments

- Okay neighbourhood – clean water/has resources
- Trying to move out
- Nothing is going to change even if I talk about it
- Newcomer supports need monitoring for use of funds
- Need help people looks at state of existence – raise voice in public forums
- Need job