

***Community Service System* in Toronto neighbourhoods: What should the City pay attention to?**

A summary of consultations with Torontonians

Who should read this report?

Community organizations, community funders and other Torontonians who care about a strong *Community Service System*.

What is the Community Service System?

The collection of the non-profit and voluntary community organizations in neighbourhoods, the connections between them, and the programs and services they deliver to neighbourhood residents.

Prepared September 2011

Download an electronic version of this report at:
stmichaelshospital.com/crich/cssreport.php

Key Messages

- **Torontonians in this consultation had very similar views about what the City of Toronto should pay attention to, so that it knows whether the *Community Service System* is working well in a neighbourhood.**

- **Torontonians think that the City should pay attention to 8 things:**

- **Are programs and services available and accessible to residents?**
- **Is funding for the *Community Service System* sufficient and stable?**
- **Are residents involved in planning programs and services?**
- **Are accountability and collaboration high priorities in the *Community Service System*?**
- **Are staff and volunteers well-managed?**
- **Are socio-economic outcomes improving for residents?**
- **Is civic and social engagement encouraged through the *Community Service System*?**
- **Are residents' needs being met by the *Community Service System*?**

- **Our findings suggest:**

- **Torontonians want the *Community Service System* to offer programs that are accessible, available and well funded.**

Almost everyone told us that “Accessible & Available Programs” and “Sufficient & Stable Funding” were the most important things for the City to pay attention to, to know if the *Community Service System* is working well in a neighbourhood.

- **Youth and people with up to a high school education have additional priorities - they want the *Community Service System* to help them to get jobs and become financially stable.**

“Improving Social and Economic Outcomes” was a higher priority for youth (aged 18-24) and high school graduates than it was for other participants (i.e. adults aged 25-64 and people who had attended university).

About this consultation

Background

This consultation is part of a larger City of Toronto initiative called the Community Partnership Strategy. This Strategy helps the City, community organizations and residents better understand how well the *Community Service System* is working in neighbourhoods.

The *Community Service System* includes non-profit and voluntary community organizations and the programs and services they provide to Torontonians (such as recreation, youth mentoring, community kitchens, arts programs and help finding employment). It also includes all the people working in the organizations, the places where programs run, the funds that are used, the connections between organizations and relationships with local businesses and government.

What we did

The Centre for Research on Inner City Health conducted this consultation to find out what Torontonians think the Community Partnership Strategy should pay attention to, to know if the *Community Service System* is working well in a neighbourhood.

Between December 2010 and July 2011, we used a method called Concept Mapping to gather information. Concept Mapping is a way of asking people, step-by-step, to brainstorm ideas in response to a big question, rate the importance of all of the different ideas and describe how the ideas are connected to each other. It can be used for planning, program evaluation and needs assessments. In Concept Mapping, participants create the ideas, not the consultants. People can generate ideas together and everyone's voice counts.

Who participated

More than 280 Torontonians participated in this consultation. They included youth, adults and older adults who lived or worked in neighbourhoods all across the City of Toronto. We talked to men and women from Etobicoke, York, North York, the old City of Toronto, East York and Scarborough.

The participants represented a range of ethnicities, language groups and educational backgrounds. Some were staff at community organizations or were funders of the *Community Service System*. Many were neighbourhood residents who used the *Community Service System*. We also talked to residents who did not use the *Community Service System* at all.

More participant information is available in our online report at stmichaelshospital.com/crich/cssreport.php.

51 important ideas

Brainstorming was the first step of our consultation. In December 2010, we asked Torontonians to brainstorm as many ideas as possible to complete the following statement:

“If the City of Toronto wants to know if the *Community Service System* is working well in a neighbourhood, one thing it should pay attention to is...”

Participants came up with 51 unique ideas (see right).

For this step, neighbourhood residents, community organization staff and funding staff participated online or in-person at community centres in Scarborough and Etobicoke.

Rating was the next step. Between February and March 2011, participants rated the importance of each of the 51 ideas on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 meant “unimportant” and 5 meant “extremely important”).

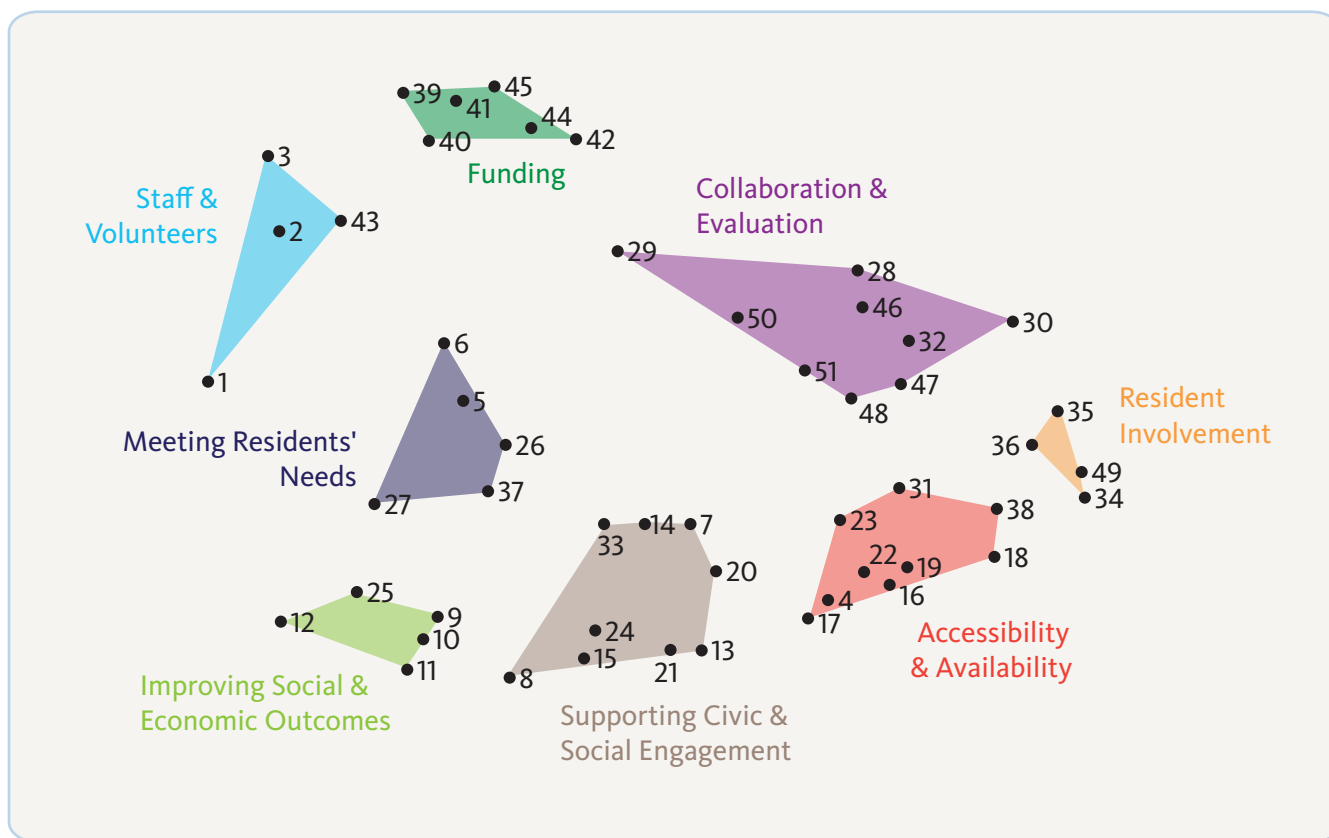
Almost all participants said that all the ideas were important (3 or higher, on a scale of 1-5).

For this step, 284 people participated, either online or in group sessions held downtown, in Etobicoke, in North York and in Scarborough.

- 1 Community organizations have staff who reflect the cultural, racial or ethnic makeup of the neighbourhood.
- 2 Community organizations have long-serving staff and volunteers.
- 3 Community organizations can pay for trained, qualified staff.
- 4 Community organizations tailor services/programs for the unique needs of the neighbourhood (e.g. social, cultural, economic).
- 5 Community organizations have time to do outreach.
- 6 Community organizations spend more time on services/ programs and less time on administration.
- 7 Community service/program users are satisfied.
- 8 Community organizations help make a neighbourhood safe and with a low crime rate.
- 9 Community organizations improve the health of vulnerable groups.
- 10 Community organizations help reduce unemployment in a neighbourhood.
- 11 Community organizations help neighbourhood residents achieve a good education.
- 12 Community organizations help neighbourhood residents have a secure income.
- 13 Community organizations support neighbourhood festivals and other events.
- 14 Community services/programs are frequently used.
- 15 Community organizations help residents participate in civic life.
- 16 Community services/ programs are offered at convenient times for the users.
- 17 The neighbourhood has welcoming spaces for residents and community organizations to use.
- 18 The neighbourhood residents know about the community services/programs that are available.
- 19 Community services/programs are offered in convenient locations for neighbourhood residents (e.g. close by, near TTC, in a safe area).
- 20 Community organizations create a welcoming environment (e.g. friendly staff, inviting spaces).
- 21 Community organizations help neighbourhood residents connect with one another.
- 22 Community organizations take extra steps to reach out to residents who are isolated, so they can use services/programs.
- 23 Community organizations adapt to changing needs and priorities of neighbourhood residents.
- 24 Community services/ programs are available to link residents to the arts.
- 25 Community services/ programs are available to link residents to jobs.
- 26 The neighbourhood residents have a lot of services/ programs to choose from.
- 27 The neighbourhood residents don't have to leave the neighbourhood for services/ programs.
- 28 Community organizations collaborate with decision makers.
- 29 Community organizations have opportunities to grow and improve.
- 30 Community organizations communicate well with one another.
- 31 Community organizations communicate well with neighbourhood residents.
- 32 Community organizations in one sector (e.g. childcare/ HIV/ anti-poverty/ environmental) collaborate with community organizations in other sectors.
- 33 Community organizations can connect residents to other services/programs.
- 34 The neighbourhood residents are involved in decisions about community organizations.
- 35 Community organizations ask service/program users for feedback.
- 36 Community organizations ask for input from vulnerable groups who don't use services.
- 37 Community organizations do outreach well.
- 38 Community organizations recognize the local knowledge and expertise of neighbourhood residents.
- 39 Community organizations have stable funding.
- 40 Community organizations are well-resourced.
- 41 Community organizations don't have to interrupt services/programs because they run out of money.
- 42 Community organizations have funds to coordinate services/programs with each other.
- 43 Community organizations staff and volunteers are satisfied with their workplaces.
- 44 Community organizations have multiple sources of funding.
- 45 Community organizations do not have to compete with one another for funding.
- 46 Community organizations have clear goals that are monitored and evaluated.
- 47 Community service/program evaluations are available to neighbourhood residents.
- 48 Community organizations use multiple sources of information to keep track of how the neighbourhood is changing.
- 49 Neighbourhood residents identify neighbourhood needs and barriers to services/programs.
- 50 Community organizations implement, monitor and evaluate their strategic plans.
- 51 Community organizations make the best use of the assets and resources in the neighbourhood to provide services and programs.

8 things to pay attention to in the *Community Service System*

The next step was **clustering**. Between February and March 2011, 60 Torontonians clustered the 51 ideas in ways that made sense to them. Then we used Concept Mapping software to create the “cluster map” below, based on participants’ responses. Finally, we brought participants back together to make sure the results felt right to them.



How to read this cluster map:

Each number on the cluster map represents one of the 51 important ideas (as numbered on the facing page - for example, “12” represents “Community organizations help neighbourhood residents have a secure income.”). The cluster map shows:

(a) **The ideas that were clustered together most frequently** (shown close together on the map). For example, “12” was often clustered with “25” (“Community services/programs are available to link residents to jobs”).

(b) **The ideas that were rarely clustered together** (shown far apart on the map). For example, “12” was rarely clustered with “30” (“Community organizations communicate well with one another”).

(c) **The names of the 8 things to pay attention to**, based on participants’ suggestions. For example, “Improving Social & Economic Outcomes” and “Supporting Civic & Social Engagement”.

Comparing participants' priorities

For the last step, we used Concept Mapping software to compare how different groups of participants rated and ranked the ideas.

The software produced a set of pattern matches, which show whether two groups ranked things in the same order or not.

We've included some pattern matches below and to the right. A horizontal (i.e. flat) bar means that the two groups rated something the same way. A sloped bar shows how much their ratings differed. The number at the bottom (the "correlation coefficient", e.g. "r = .87") is a measure of similarity. It ranges from "0" to "1.0". ".7" or higher means very strong similarity.

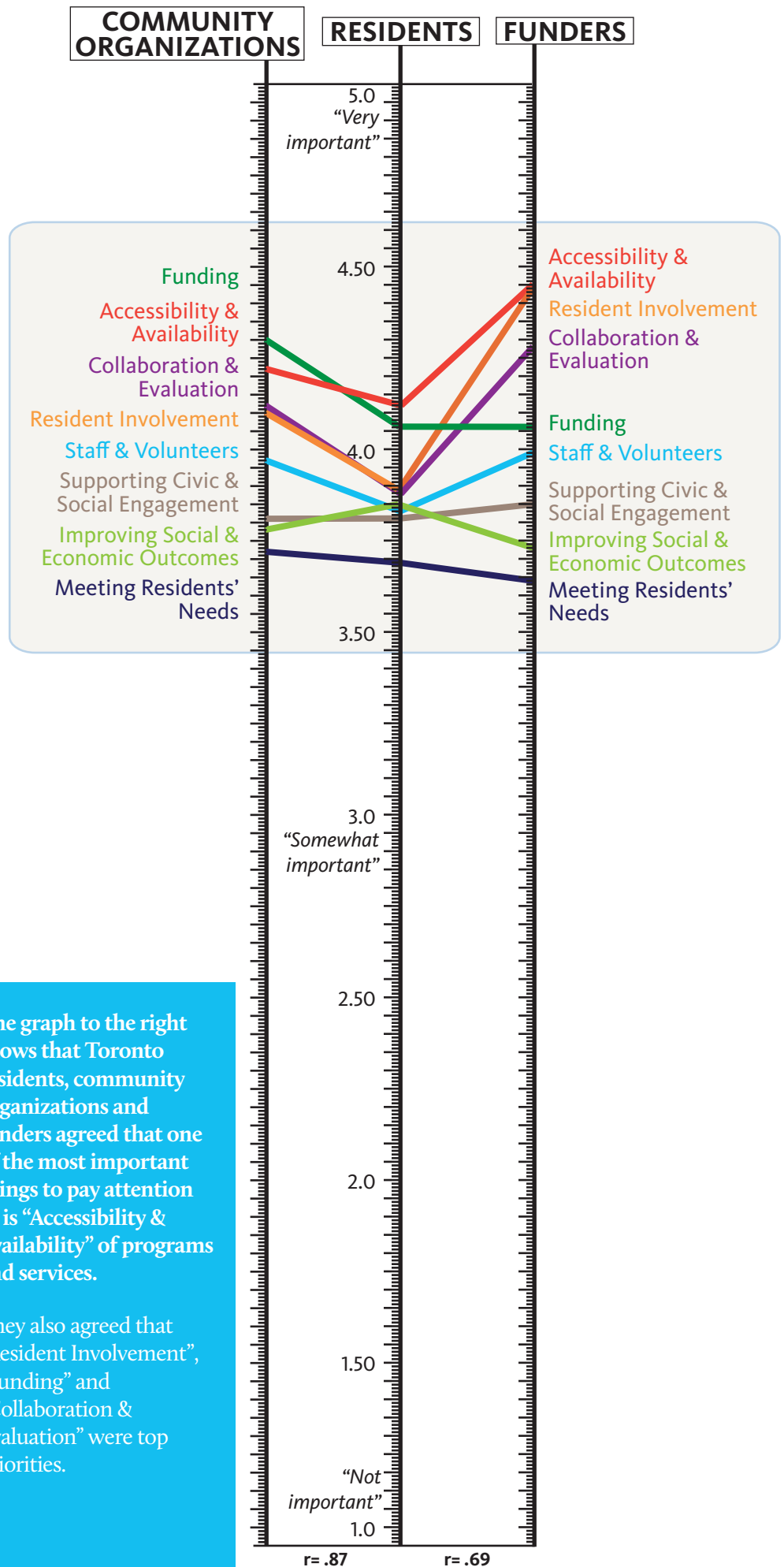
Most participants ranked the "main things to pay attention to" in the same way.

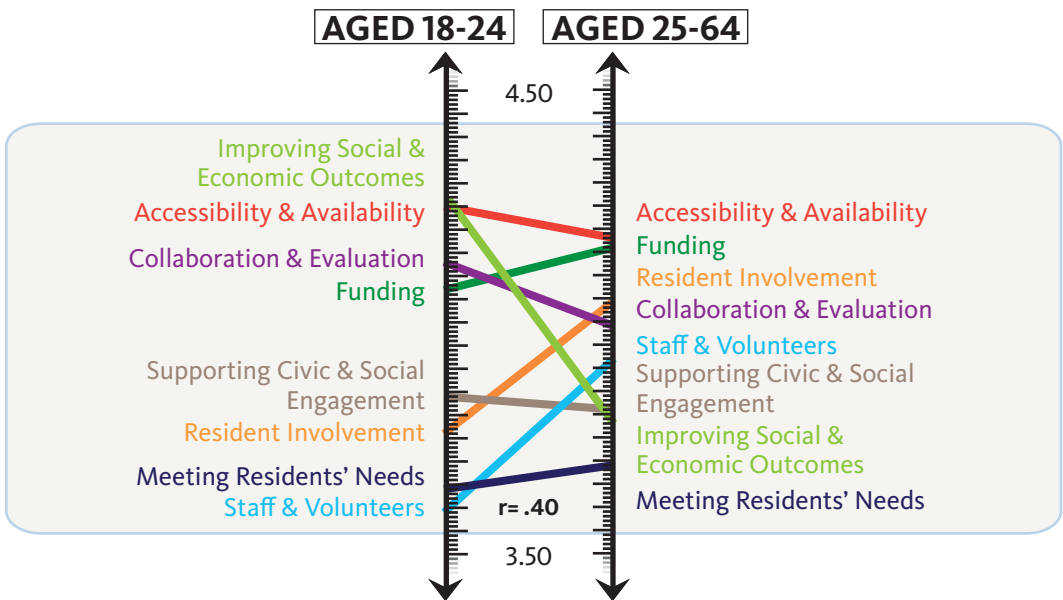
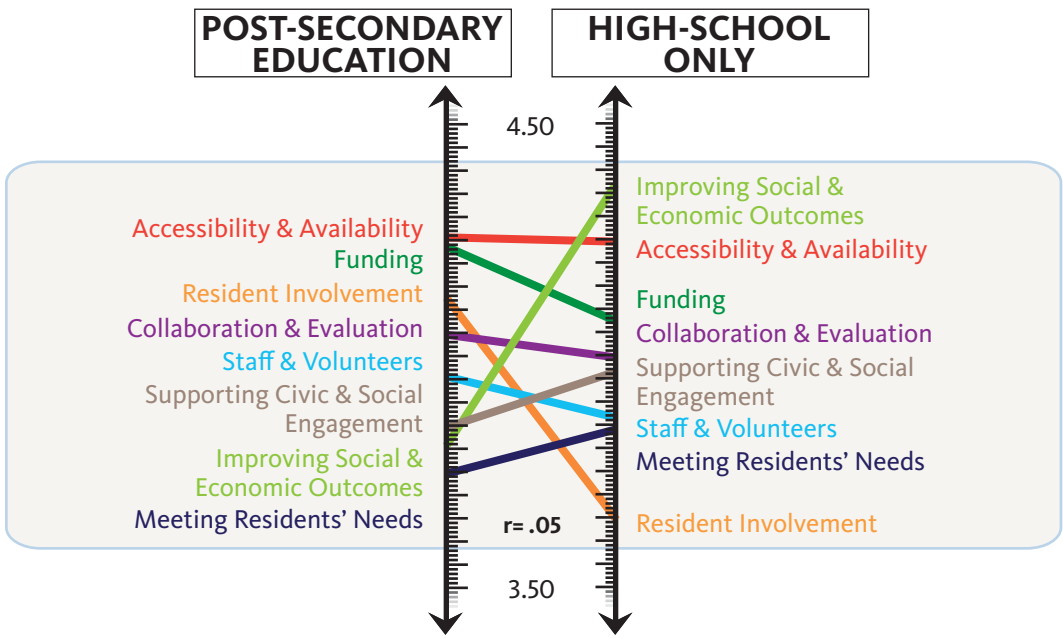
There was strong agreement between:

- Men and women (r=.87)
- Residents who use/ do not use community services (r=.70)
- People whose primary language is and is not English (r=.94)
- Residents and community organization staff (r=.87)
- Residents and funders (r=.69)

The graph to the right shows that Toronto residents, community organizations and funders agreed that one of the most important things to pay attention to is "Accessibility & Availability" of programs and services.

They also agreed that "Resident Involvement", "Funding" and "Collaboration & Evaluation" were top priorities.





ETOBICOKE & YORK	SCARBOROUGH	OLD TORONTO & EAST YORK	NORTH YORK	HIGHER PRIORITY
Accessibility & Availability	Funding	Funding	Funding	↑
Improving Social & Economic Outcomes	Collaboration & Evaluation	Accessibility & Availability	Collaboration & Evaluation	
Supporting Civic & Social Engagement	Accessibility & Availability	Resident Involvement	Accessibility & Availability	
Collaboration & Evaluation	Resident Involvement	Staff & Volunteers	Staff & Volunteers	
Resident Involvement	Meeting Residents' Needs	Supporting Civic & Social Engagement	Resident Involvement	
Funding	Improving Social & Economic Outcomes	Improving Social & Economic Outcomes	Improving Social & Economic Outcomes	
Meeting Residents' Needs	Staff & Volunteers	Collaboration & Evaluation	Supporting Civic & Social Engagement	
Staff & Volunteers	Supporting Civic & Social Engagement	Meeting Residents' Needs	Meeting Residents' Needs	

Youth and people with up to a high school education had additional priorities - they want programs that will help them to get jobs and become financially stable.

- Educational background made a big difference in how people ranked the “main things” (see top left graph). “Improving Social & Economic Outcomes” was the top priority for high school graduates, and one of the lowest priorities for post-secondary graduates.
- People of different ages had different priorities (see middle left graph). “Improving Social & Economic Outcomes” was the top priority for youth aged 18-24, and one of the lowest priorities for adults aged 25-64.

Residents from all across Toronto had similar priorities.

“Funding” was ranked number one by residents of Scarborough, the old City of Toronto & East York, and North York. “Accessibility & Availability” was most important to residents of Etobicoke & York, number two for residents of old Toronto & East York, and number three for residents of Scarborough and North York.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Download appendices to this report, featuring more findings from this study, at crich.ca
- Toronto's 140 Social Planning Neighbourhoods:
toronto.ca/demographics/neighbourhoods.htm
- Reports to Toronto City Council on the Community Partnership Strategy:
toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-17230.pdf (November 2008)
toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-26583.pdf (February 2010)
- Concept Mapping:
conceptsystems.com
- Community Partnership Strategy:
Sarah Rix, Policy Development Officer, srix@toronto.ca, 416-392-8944

CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON INNER CITY HEALTH

The **Centre for Research on Inner City Health** (CRICH) is dedicated to reducing health inequities through innovative research that supports social change. We conduct research to better understand the linkages between poverty, social exclusion, and poor health. And we work in partnership with community agencies and decision-makers to evaluate population health interventions to improve health outcomes for inner city populations. CRICH is part of the Keenan Research Centre in the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute of St. Michael's Hospital. We receive annual core funding from the Government of Ontario.

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