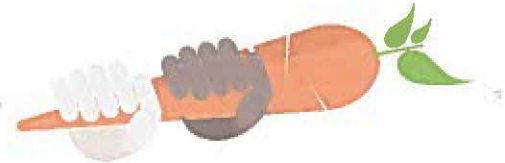


Submitted by:  
The Rev. Helena-Rose Houldcroft

EX9.5.33



FLEMINGDON & THORNCLIFFE  
FOOD SECURITY  
NETWORK  
NETWORK  
FOOD SECURITY

## **Closing the Food Access Gap in the Flemingdon Park & Thorncliffe Park Neighbourhoods of Toronto, Canada**

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September 4th, 2015

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CDA - Canadian Diabetes Association  
CIC - Citizenship & Immigration Canada  
CPP - Canada Pension Plan  
FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization  
FPM - Flemingdon Park Ministries  
FTFSN - Flemingdon & Thorncliffe Food Security Network  
FUFC - Flemingdon Urban Fair Committee  
GMO - Genetically Modified Organisms  
GTA - Greater Toronto Area  
LIP - Local Immigration Partnership  
PHAC - Public Health Agency of Canada  
PRSP - Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper  
RCSS - Real Canadian Superstore  
TCHC - Toronto Community Housing Corporation  
TNO - Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office  
TSN - Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods  
TTC - Toronto Transit Commission



## **FOREWORD**

In the summer of 2014, Flemington Health Centre and Toronto North LIP staff initiated the Flemington and Thorncliffe Food Security Network to bring together community agencies and leaders working on food projects in the community.

The network was interested in conducting consultations in the wider community to hear about existing food security gaps/assets and to guide their actions moving forward. This idea was in line with the project led by the Flemington Park Ministry and Flemington Urban Fair Committee (FUFC) and funded by the McConnell Foundation, and the project leads generously offered to support this activity by offering funding and guidance to the Community Animators conducting the research. The network has also received funding from the Children's Aid Society for this project. Thanks to these collaborative efforts the network was able to engage four Community Animators, two from Flemington Park and two from Thorncliffe Park, to lead the consultation process. This document is the result of their work.

## **ABSTRACT**

Food insecurity is an issue that is no stranger to developing countries however, in recent years it has become a growing problem in developed countries such as Canada. Although there are great socio-economic differences between both regions, the fundamental issues that cause food insecurity are comparable. Low income is one of the major social determinants of food insecurity; a re-occurring theme that will appear throughout this report. Relatedly, lack of affordable housing and transportation, as well as limited employment opportunities, also contribute to this problem. There exists therefore, a symbiotic relationship between poverty and food insecurity, whereby one is the cause and consequence of the other. Most vulnerable are immigrant families, senior citizens, and those dependent on social assistance.

An investigation of the factors that hinder access to food, as well as understanding how those impacted cope with their circumstances, is imperative in order to determine how best to address food insecurity in these communities. This study therefore, is based on qualitative research that seeks to identify the barriers faced by residents of the Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park neighbourhoods in Toronto, Canada. It provides brief insights into the ways in which they cope with and mitigate against incidences of food insecurity through an exploration of their lived experiences. In turn, it is our hope that this information can be used to inform project ideas and to identify potential areas for further research.

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT

In recent years, incidences of food insecurity have been growing at alarming rates. More families have been turning to food banks to help meet their basic dietary needs. In their *“Who’s Hungry: The Tale of Three Cities”* report, the Daily Bread Food Bank announced that for the 5th year in a row, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is seeing an over one million visits to food banks.<sup>1</sup> That is an alarming one sixth of the city’s population that are struggling with food insecurity. In order to be able to address the issue, one must first understand the cause of it.

It is first important to understand what food insecurity is. As has been indicated above, it relates to peoples inability to purchase foods. However, food insecurity is more than just about individuals purchasing power. Rather, it is also about having equal access to culturally appropriate foods and the kinds of foods that will allow individuals to live healthy lives. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines it as follows:

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”<sup>2</sup>

Food security then, is not just a question of being able to purchase foods for sustenance. It is concerned with the availability and accessibility of food. Both have become a growing challenge for many Torontonians, primarily for those residing in what have been identified by the city of Toronto as Priority Neighbourhoods. Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park are 2 of 31 neighbourhoods that fall under this category.<sup>3</sup> These neighbourhoods are characterized by dense populations and low income households. Although food insecurity impacts households differently, the social factors that influence their vulnerability include but are not limited to low income, access to other forms of assets, proximity to grocery stores stocked with healthy foods (food deserts), and community food programs. Most vulnerable to food insecurity according to PROOF, an international team of researchers committed to addressing household food insecurity due to financial constraints, are the following:

“Aboriginal Canadians, households reliant on social assistance, households headed by single mothers, and those renting rather than owning a home”.<sup>4</sup>

Food insecurity is more pronounced in households that have limited assets at their disposal. Understanding what factors hinder families residing in the Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park areas access to foods as well as the combination of assets they have access to can give insight into the cause of insecurity. Additionally, it can inform initiatives needed to reduce vulnerabilities and create a stronger, more resilient community. Assets are not limited to cash or

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<sup>1</sup> (<http://www.dailybread.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/WhosHungry2013FINAL.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-home/en/>)

<sup>3</sup>

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=e0bc186e20ee0410VqnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=1e68f40f9aae0410VqnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

<sup>4</sup> (<http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca>)

cashable items such as homes, cars, or jewelry. Rather, they include a combination of human connections that can inform of job opportunities for instance or share their assets to help with their friends and families livelihoods. It can also include access to productive assets such as gardening or farming tools, and natural space such as a garden or a farm on which one can grow foods. The more of each category an individual has, and the more diverse their portfolio, the better they fare in life. Amartya Sen, an economist and philosopher who is most known for his works on the causes of some of the greatest famines, calls this ability “exchange entitlement mapping”.<sup>5</sup> People he discovered become vulnerable to food insecurity and in turn poverty when their ability to acquire and use their assets are denied.

This study therefore seeks to identify the food access gaps that exist in the neighbourhoods of Flemington Park and Thorncliffe Park. In order to achieve this, a series of Focus Groups, Kitchen Table Talks, and Surveys were conducted with various members of the community to include Community Centres, After School Programs, ESL Classes, Food Bank Centres, Community Kitchen Programs, Seniors Residences, Parks, and Residential Buildings.

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The objective of this study is to identify food access gaps in Flemington Park and Thorncliffe Park. It also intends to identify the ways in which local residents have been coping.

## 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

### 1.3.1 MAIN QUESTION

Are Flemington Park and Thorncliffe Park food secure neighbourhoods?

### 1.3.2 SUB-QUESTIONS

If Flemington Park and Thorncliffe Park are not food secure, what barriers exist?

How have the residents been coping with the challenges?

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<sup>5</sup> [www.wider.unu.edu/publications/working-papers/.../en.../WP1.pdf](http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/working-papers/.../en.../WP1.pdf)

## **CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study seeks to understand if Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park are food insecure neighbourhoods and if so, to identify the causes. Gaining insight into the issue from the perspective of the residents themselves, who are vulnerable to food insecurity can help determine the best course of action to reduce, if not eliminate the problem. Accounts of residents lived experience, provide insight into how they have been coping with food insecurity. It can also help us identify the different assets they have at their disposal. Taking a bottom-up approach, the best course of action selected by the Flemingdon & Thorncliffe Food Security Network, will start from already existing capacities in the neighbourhood.

### **2.2 DATA COLLECTION**

Three data collection methods were applied in this investigative process: Surveys, Focus Groups and Kitchen Table Talks.

#### **2.2.1 SURVEYS**

There are two main methods to conduct Surveys: interviews and questionnaires. The latter method can be further broken-down into the following categories: mail, email, or in person. However, to accommodate the short timeframe allocated to conduct the study and to ensure that we have met our quota within the limited time period, administering questionnaires in person was selected as the most appropriate method. This guaranteed a high response rate and allowed for the community animators to respond to any questions that needed clarification. With that said, a total of 329 surveys were completed, 175 in Flemingdon Park and 154 in Thorncliffe Park.

#### **2.2.2 FOCUS GROUPS**

A total of 6 Focus Groups were conducted, where approximately 60 residents participated, to gain perspective on the residents understanding of what food security means and how food secure they believed themselves and their neighbourhoods to be. In Flemingdon Park, two were held at seniors residences and a third at a Food Bank. In Thorncliffe Park, all three were held at Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office (TNO). Participants were engaged in a discussion about the definitions of food security and what is or is not available in the area and their idea of what would make the area more food secure. Where there were language barriers, translators were hired to help facilitate the dialogues.

#### **2.2.3 KITCHEN TABLE TALKS**

Kitchen Table Talks are similar to focus groups but are more personal. Participants tend to feel more open to sharing personal details about their experiences. This strategy was therefore conducted to understand how people struggle and cope with food insecurity. Two Kitchen Table Talks were conducted, one in each neighbourhood, with a total 20 participants.

#### 2.2.4 PARTICIPANTS

In order to get a decent sample size of populations that are generally characterized as vulnerable, the following establishments were targeted for participants in the survey and focus group portion of our study:

In Flemingdon Park,

- Flemingdon Park Food Bank
- ESL Classes & After School Programs at the Dennis Timbrell Community Centre
- Family Day Care
- The Flemingdon Health Centre
- Private residential buildings
- Parks and schools
- Seniors Residences (5 & 10 Deauville Lane)

In Thorncliffe Park,

- Doctor's Study Group and LINC Classes at Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office
- City of Toronto Public Health Program at Jenner Jean-Marie Community Centre
- Ontario Early Years Centre
- Neighbours' Night Out
- Thorncliffe Park Public School Fun Fair
- East York Town Centre
- R.V. Burgess Park
- Private Residential Buildings

At these locations, participants were approached at random. Conversely, for the Kitchen Table Talks, friends, neighbours, and colleagues were personally invited to a meal at a restaurant or reserved kitchen where opinions about and personal experiences with food insecurity were shared.

#### 2.3 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Surveys were recorded by hand. The Community Animators asked questions and wrote down the answers as the participants responded. The questions were mostly closed ended, therefore only required for check boxes to be checked off for the most part. The last section of the survey was open-ended but more opinion based which many did not have answers to. Both the Kitchen Table Talks and the Focus Groups were recorded. They were subsequently transcribed the same day along with impressions and observations of the events.

To analyze the data, the transcripts and the open-ended question section of the surveys were reviewed several times over in order to identify recurring themes. Major barriers that limited the residents ability to live food secure lives were categorized into themes and were subsequently coded. Then, a discussion about these themes was written up to paint a full picture of the challenges that the residents of Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park faced.

## 2.4 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The study encountered a few limitations. Firstly, it is not a comprehensive study. It is not representative of all the residents of Flemington Park and Thorncliffe Park's experiences. It is rather an attempt to use a few narratives to put into context a growing problem in the region and in turn to determine how best to address it.

Secondly, using translators helped facilitate discussions with populations who could not communicate in English. However, it was hard to determine how accurate the translations were and to ensure they asked non-leading questions. Similarly, there was no way to verify that they translated the participants' response fully. Certain concepts, when interpreted instead of translated, can lead to the omission of information potentially vital to the study.

Lastly, some questions were left unanswered for various reasons. Some either did not feel comfortable disclosing certain information or they did not understand the questions altogether. Surveys where only 1 or 2 questions maximum were skipped were included in the analysis. All others were discarded.



## CHAPTER 3: SUMMARY

### 3.1 SURVEYS

#### **Flemingdon Park**

A total of 175 residents of Flemingdon Park participated in the surveys, 86 percent of which were women. The respondents mostly came from 3 to 5 member households and have lived in the area for less than 5 years. Next to English, a language spoken by 76 per cent of the surveyed population, the languages that had a dominant presence were all South East Asian at 60 per cent of the total surveyed population (with Urdu as the most spoken language - 26% of the total population). This could indicate one of two things:

- 1) a denser population size from these communities in this region, or
- 2) members of this ethnic community are more vulnerable to food insecurity than other communities.

The statistics of the regions demographics from the city of Toronto would indicate that the former statement is most likely.

When asked what languages were most spoken at home, again, English was the language most cited, thereafter South East Asian languages take dominance. When asked about where they shopped, the residents of Flemingdon Park said they purchased foods at grocery stores, restaurants, and other miscellaneous stores in not only Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park, but also other adjacent neighbourhoods such as Victoria Village and Don Mills. A large majority of respondents shop at Sunny Foodmart (83 per cent) primarily but do turn to Food Basics (54 percent), the Real Canadian Superstore (31 percent), Shoppers Drug Mart (32 percent) & Iqbal Halal Foods (32 percent) in neighbouring areas for groceries. Very few mentioned shopping at a farmers market and many (67 percent) eat at restaurants, mostly fast food establishments (ethnic or other).

When asked about their mode of transportation, 69 percent of respondents explained that they walked to the grocery stores but may often times find themselves taking public transit (TTC) or driving. The fact that most people are walking is an indication that grocery stores are within close proximity to their place of residence. It takes them on average 5 - 10 minutes to get to the grocery stores, although many have expressed having to travel more than 10 minutes. Less than 1 percent of the surveyed population used taxis, bikes, or other modes of transportation to get to a grocery store.

Seventy six percent of respondents do not feel that they could not find the food items they needed for the upkeep of their health. Those that did however, expressed there being a shortage in gluten-free options, halal, lactose-free, sugarless, organic and food appropriate for diabetics. Not all that complained of the disparity sought for the missing food items elsewhere but those that did, said that it takes them on average 30 minutes to get to that store.



Similarly, 74 percent of respondents do not feel their neighbourhoods are lacking in culturally appropriate foods. However, those that felt otherwise said there were not enough halal food options (ready-made foods, good quality meats, vegetables, and dairy products such as cheese, yogurt and ice cream). Additionally, they expressed that indigenous vegetables and spices from their native countries were not available in the area, leaving most to travel to other neighbourhoods to acquire. Those that go outside of the neighbourhood to acquire the missing items, travel approximately 30 minutes to get to stores stocked with desired items.

Even if the foods they needed were available, almost half of the respondents expressed often not having sufficient funds to purchase foods for health or cultural reasons after all of their regular monthly expenses have been paid. To help aid with the supply of fresh produce it is not uncommon for people to resort to growing their own either in a community garden or on their balconies. The respondents who did not however, were equally split down the middle in their interest to take on such an endeavour.

When asked what food programs they used or knew of in the area, 51 percent of respondents knew of programs in their neighbourhoods however, they were mostly related to the food bank services. They have mostly heard of them through their friends or community service organizations. In terms of improving the program, some of the more common responses given include a desire for more food bank hours (weekend and weeknights) to accommodate the working individuals and students. They expressed interests in summer kids programs and more workshops about nutrition and cooking. Some indicated better food bank services such as pre-bagging food items, faster services, TTC tokens for coming to food banks, and less canned goods. Respondents also expressed a desire for more street vendors, employment/internship opportunities, social programs for the community and child minding services. Some expressed interest in a community garden and have been on a waiting list since 2012. They said about 80 people are on this list.

Further suggestions were given for potential projects in the area that could help close the growing food access gap. Popular responses include affordable farmers market, fresh produce food truck, subsidized food markets, healthy cultural food cooking workshops, a request for free tutoring, summer programs for kids, community gardens, nutrition programs, verification of expiration dates on foods at the Food Bank, workshops on how to preserve produce for the winter, gardening options in the winter, more kitchen programs, meals on wheels, youth employment training/ internships and subsidizing food prices.

### **Thorncliffe Park**

A total of 154 surveys were completed in the Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood. The majority of respondents were female. Family size ranged from one member to seven members with the majority of respondents having a household size between three and five. Respondents have lived in the neighbourhood for lengths of time ranging from a few months to over 40 years, the majority however, have lived in the neighbourhood for less than a decade. Thirty-four languages were identified on the surveys, but the most common languages spoken were English (80 per cent) and Urdu (41 per cent.)

The majority of respondents indicated that they do their grocery shopping at the Food Basics in the neighbourhood mall. Iqbal Halal Food was the second most popular as it is the largest store selling all Halal foods and many participants also mentioned Shoppers Drug Mart. Smaller stores in the East York Town Centre such as the Halal meat store and Bill's Farm received a few responses. Many respondents noted that they also shop outside of the neighbourhood including Sunny Foodmart in Flemingdon Park as well as the Real Canadian Superstore (RCSS), No Frill's, and Walmart. The majority of respondents said that they eat at local restaurants, with Bamiyan Kabob and Afghan Cuisine being popular eating spots. Food vans, trucks that park on the side of the road or in parking lots and sell fruits and vegetables, are also very popular.

The majority of respondents said that they walk to do their grocery shopping as the stores in Thorncliffe Park are within a walking distance of 10 minutes. However, many also take the car or use public transit. A few use bicycles or taxis. Those who shop outside of the neighbourhood indicate a travel time of longer than 10 minutes.

The majority of respondents (79 per cent) indicated they are satisfied with the availability of food in the neighbourhood for health reasons. Of those who reported that they are not satisfied, the food not available are Organic, Diabetic, Lactose-Free, Low-Fat, Fresh Fruits, and Gluten-Free. One respondent said they get these items outside of the neighbourhood, which takes approximately 15-30 minutes. Four respondents said that they do not go elsewhere and one reports they are managing with what is available.

When buying food for cultural reasons, the majority of respondents (80 per cent) are satisfied with the availability of foods in the neighbourhood. Respondents from South Asian backgrounds were almost all satisfied with the availability of foods. A small number from that population group reported that they were not satisfied with the availability of specific goods from Bangladesh or specific Halal foods (dairy, bakery) in Thorncliffe Park.

When asked about the affordability of groceries on a monthly basis, more than half of respondents indicated that they are experiencing some level of food insecurity. Almost 60 per cent of respondents stated that after their monthly expenses, they do not have enough money to buy all of the food items they need for health or cultural reasons.

Nineteen per cent of respondents grow their own food, either in community gardens or on their balconies. A lack of gardening space in the community or lack of knowledge on how to grow at home is what prevents most people from doing so. Fifty-eight per cent of those who said they do not grow their own food indicated that they would be interested in doing so.

When asked about food-related programs and services in the neighbourhood, less than half of respondents indicated that they had heard of any. They said that they find out about these programs mostly through friends, family, and neighbours as well as community organizations. When asked to suggest improvements for these programs, most answered more advertisement, more/different hours (including evenings, weekends, and holidays), more programs, and more gardens. Other important suggestions include more locations, more people targeted, and child care.

Toward the completion of the surveys, participants were asked to provide suggestions for projects that would help to address the gaps that exist in the neighbourhood. The most popular suggestions were Farmer's Markets, more community gardens and garden programming, newsletters (to inform residents about food-related programs and events), a community kitchen for cooking classes, and teaching healthy eating in schools. Many respondents were eager to see more education in the neighbourhood surrounding food. They want to learn about how to determine the quality of food, navigate the grocery stores, read food labels, cook foods that are new to them, and preserve foods.

### 3.2 KITCHEN TABLE TALKS

#### **Flemingdon Park**

The participants of this research method were already members of a community kitchen program. When asked about their impressions of food security, their understanding revolved around some variation of eating healthy foods, fresh and organic fruits and vegetables. There were two central themes that emerged in our discussion regarding their main challenges to accessing healthy foods: cost and education. The neighbourhood, they say is stocked, with a good variety of fresh produce however, it is either too expensive or some of the affordable fruits/vegetables are unfamiliar to them and because they do not know how to cook them, they do not eat them. Instead they will throw it away or not accept it (if obtained at the Food Bank) or not purchase it all together.

The respondents expressed that participating in the community kitchen program provided them with both physical and mental benefits. These benefits are as follows:

- a) Learning how to cook healthy meals: preparing healthier versions of foods they already eat as well as dishes from different ethnic backgrounds.
- b) Learning about nutrition and portion control: cooking best practices for healthy consumption for instance incorporating more vegetables and less oil, sugar, sodium, and processed foods.
- c) Making new friends: socializing, laughing and sharing their experiences and ideas, as well as offer each other advice.
- d) Networking: learn about volunteer and employment opportunities.
- e) Practicing English: for better integration in society.

The participants all contributed as best they could to the discussion although there were linguistic barriers. They were all from either South East Asia or Afghanistan and Iran. Their level of fluency in English varied but their opinions where food security was concerned were all quite similar. Potential solutions suggested to close the food access gap in the neighbourhood include:

- a) Community gardens and selling produce for personal profit (micro-credit for urban agriculture)
- b) Growing organic foods at home. Gardening solves the issue for the summer, however they weren't sure what they can do during the winter months.
- c) Purchasing foods from wholesalers and buying at wholesaler price.

## **Thorncliffe Park**

When shopping for groceries, most participants indicated that they shop outside of the neighbourhood and then use the local stores when they forgot or ran out of an item. They primarily use the car to shop outside of the neighbourhood but will walk to stores in both Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park.

All of the participants indicated that there were foods for both health and cultural reasons that they cannot find in the neighbourhood and shop elsewhere for. This includes organic foods, non-genetically modified foods (GMOs), organic halal meat, and Caribbean foods. According to one participant there is only one store in the Toronto area that sells organic halal meat which is a 40 minute drive from Thorncliffe Park. The participants who purchase Caribbean foods travel to the West end of Toronto or 20-30 minutes away in the East end to find what they are looking for.

While most of the participants feel that they always or often have enough food for their groceries on a monthly basis, they note that they know many people who face this issue. Many participants indicated that they have cut down on the amount of meat they eat to save money on their groceries while some have stopped eating it completely because of the expense.

The majority of participants in the talk participate in gardening projects in the neighbourhood or grow food on their balconies. However, some were unsure of how to optimally grow their own food and were hesitant to do so because of this.

Participants were familiar with food-related programs in the neighbourhood including the Food Bank, Community Gardens, and the Seedy Sunday event. However they felt that there were not enough of these programs to serve the entire community. They indicate that there are a lot of ideas in the neighbourhood that never get off the ground because residents do not receive support in creating these programs.

When asked what they think Thorncliffe Park would benefit from having in the community, the responses included Farmer's Markets, a Community Kitchen, and the Food Share Good Food Box. When discussing gardening, ideas that were mentioned include Market Gardens, Free Access Gardens, and Raised Bed Gardening in parking lots and on roofs. Participants also believe that more education in the neighbourhood about healthy eating and gardening is a good idea.



### 3.3 FOCUS GROUPS

#### **Flemington Park**

When asked what words came to mind when they thought of shopping for food in the neighbourhood, the participants mentioned fresh foods, organic produce, and fruits and vegetables. They also mentioned cheaper priced produce. This suggests that they are concerned with being able to access fresh and affordable produce for healthy living. Some also mentioned needing low fat foods and foods that did not have preservatives.

The participants were all over the spectrum in their opinions regarding whether the neighbourhood was food secure or not. Some said it was, while others said it wasn't. Those that said it wasn't went beyond reasons of cost but also availability. Some mention having to travel to other neighbourhoods to purchase culturally appropriate foods such as some fishes or vegetables indigenous to their homelands. Participants have mentioned having traveled to near by neighbourhoods like Thorncliffe Park, and the Golden Mile (Victoria Park & Eglinton), all the way to Spadina & College area. Conversely, those that said the neighbourhood was food secure said that most things are available in the neighbourhood however the quality of the foods are questionable, especially deli meats, soy products, and poultry. Their main complaint was that these foods were not fresh. Of particular concern are the foods that go on sale. Firstly, they find them to be too large to consume within a short period of time considering they reside in households that don't have more than 2 members if any other than themselves. Secondly, the foods aren't always fresh. They go on sale when it is nearing or in some cases past their expiration date. They mentioned that some stores don't check for expiration dates. Many of the participants expressed finding upon their return home from the grocery store that the foods they purchased not only were passed the expiration date but were already rotting when packages were opened. Items mentioned whereby this happened included tofu, yogurt, cookies, cake, pumpkin seeds, and tomato sauce. Many said that this comes from foods purchased at even some of the best local high-end grocery stores. They have returned the items to the stores for a full refund however, the stores did not take any action to remove stock from the shelves even days later.

The participants that were residents of a seniors' home said their financial resources were limited. Some were completely reliant on Canada Pension Plan (CPP) as a source of income, which isn't enough to afford the foods they need. Besides grocery stores, some participants mentioned going to random fields to collect wild vegetables. Some travel to other neighbourhoods such as the St-Lawrence Market where they have farmers markets every Saturday. All traveled downtown to purchase goods they cannot find in the neighbourhood, such as Chinese chives, millet, flax seed, yeast, and soy paste. They said that it is only seldom available in local stores. When it is in stock, it is too expensive. They also go to the Foodie Market, a Chinese grocery store on Steeles (North York) or Dafoos in Markham. They do not participate in Community Gardens although they know of opportunities, because of their age and physical limitations to participate (e.g. painful knees). They partake in Community Kitchens activities and learn best cooking practices and how to cook different meals. Some frequent Food Banks and have expressed knowing or acquiring foods from the following food programs:

1. Food Boxes from Health Centres
2. Community Kitchen Programs

3. Food Trucks but no longer exists
4. Community gardens but they do not participate
5. Door to door delivery (food box): a man used to deliver a box of foods right to their doors but this service no longer exists

Many of the programs they enjoyed or found helpful no longer exist. Suggested solutions given included having a community store that would have the items that people would want more inexpensively, such as cheaper vegetables and cultural foods. It was also mentioned a preference to ensure that supermarkets have expiration dates on packages. When inquired about whether they knew the difference between an expiration date and a best by date, no one was able to give an answer. It was explained to them but they still did not seem to like the idea. Further suggested solutions include:

1. A big store that sells fresh produce and meats (a major complaint given was that grocers just put defrosted meats in ice and call it fresh)
2. Door to door service
3. Advise grocery stores to create sales well before expiration dates
4. Education on how to preserve fruits and vegetables (debates on whether it will still maintain its freshness and nutritive value)
5. Rigorous food inspection standards for grocery stores
6. Food truck that delivers foods to their lobby in the winters
7. Agency whereby consumers can complain about quality of foods or food service
8. Fresh fruits and vegetables shop that is affordable
9. Community garden

One participant at the Food Bank mentioned that there are some culturally appropriate food that are not available in the neighbourhood. She travels to the Jane and Finch area to purchase items such as pound yam at an African specialty food store. The cost of food then is no longer their only concern, but now the cost of transportation as well. All the participants said that they get around using the TTC or by foot and do not own a metropass. This particular respondent at times is able to borrow a vehicle from one of her friends but then she has to put the gas in the tank, yet, another expense to consider. They also mention shopping at Sunny, No Frills, Food Basics, the Superstore & Iqbal. Some of these grocery stores, although are within close proximity to their homes, aren't located in Flemingdon Park. Some are located in Thorncliffe Park, while others are in Victoria Village.

The participants mentioned that it is inconvenient and expensive to have to go to different grocery stores in the area to purchase different items, even if they are close by. One respondent explained that she will go to privately owned grocers for lettuce only, then go to Food Basics and the Superstore for other items.

Freshness of foods in the neighbourhood was another issue the participants voiced their concerns over. They said that grocery stores package their goods in such a way that you cannot really assess the freshness or quality of the foods. One participant mentioned that she believes that grocery stores put the prettiest packaging at the top/front of stock but when you bring it home and open the packaging, for meats for example, you find that it is full of fat. Or apples that look nice in the store but when you take a bite out of it, you find it rotten. Other examples given were

of rotten sacks of potatoes. Apples, again, they said look good in stores but the very next day when they bring it home, there is a family of fruit flies congregating around them. To pay high prices for foods that you'll have to throw away is very frustrating especially since the participants do not have much disposable income. The participants of this focus group all are clients of the food bank.

### **Thorncliffe Park**

The discussion in the Focus Groups was started by asking participants to brainstorm what comes to mind when shopping for food in the neighbourhood. They mentioned specific stores including Food Basics, Shoppers Drug Mart, and Iqbal, but mostly they focused on the quality of food in the neighbourhood as well as the prices.

Freshness and quality of the available foods was the topic that received the most attention. All participants indicated that they are not satisfied with the quality of the food that is sold in the neighbourhood. Some participants mentioned that they do their shopping on a daily basis to ensure that food does not spoil. The majority of participants have purchased expired food from stores on more than one occasion.

Most participants felt that the cost of food was too high. While most say that they always or often have enough money to buy groceries, they are worried about the rising costs. Many find that while they still spend the same amount of money on groceries as they have in the past, they are bringing home less food and this is a cause for concern if this trend continues. Participants also spoke about the ways in which they cope with the rising costs of food. They report that grocery shopping takes a lot of planning using flyers, sales, and price matching to make groceries affordable. Some mentioned splitting bulk purchases with friends and family to ensure that food does not spoil. However, others expressed being unable to do this due to property management not allowing extra freezers or the inability to get to stores outside of the neighbourhood where bulk foods are sold.

The majority of participants in the Focus Groups were from South Asian backgrounds and they all reported being satisfied with the availability of cultural foods. However, respondents from West African backgrounds reported the opposite. They said that they have to travel to the West end of Toronto to get the foods they need, a trip that takes 30 minutes to an hour each way. Some are only able to make this trip on a monthly basis, as they use the TTC to get there.

The health concern most mentioned was organic and chemical-free foods. Many expressed concern with not knowing what is in the food they are eating and whether or not the foods are safe to eat. They stated that they wished to see more education about this in the neighbourhood, as many people are newcomers and this is a new concern that they face.

Food Insecurity as a defined term is something that most participants of our focus groups are unfamiliar with, even when they are experiencing it themselves. Once they were given a definition, they were asked if they felt Thorncliffe Park was food secure. In the first group, 100 per cent of participants answered "No." In the second group, 22 per cent of participants answered "No." While the rest did not give a definite answer, most nodded in agreement with those who

answered and no one spoke up to say that they felt the neighbourhood was food secure. In the third group, both participants answered that they felt the neighbourhood was food secure.

When asked about food-related programs and services in the neighbourhood participants were unable to name projects. Some knew of projects in Flemingdon Park but not in Thorncliffe Park. They felt that this was due to a lack of demand amongst residents. They are not active enough to create these programs or do not know where to get the help to do so.

Participants were then asked what programs they thought were needed in Thorncliffe Park to help residents enjoy healthy food. Many participants wanted to see ways to get food that don't involve going to the store including the Food Share Good Food Box, Food Vans/Trucks, Home Delivery, and Farmer's Markets. Many participants want a flyer or newsletter that distributes information to residents about where they can shop and where they can get certain foods. They would like to see this as some people do not have family or friends in the neighbourhood who can help them find these things. Distribution ideas include delivery to their homes, posting in communal areas in the buildings, or given to them by property managers when they move into the neighbourhood. Other ideas include more gardens, education, U-pick farm trips, and bulk food stores.



## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

### 4.1 FOOD SECURITY STATISTICS

A recent study done by Statistics Canada states that 8.3 per cent of Canadian households experience food insecurity<sup>6</sup>, which is defined as a household where one or more members do not have access to the variety or quantity of food they need due to lack of money. In our consultations, 52 per cent of respondents in Thorncliffe Park and 47% of respondents in Flemingdon reported that they do not always have enough money to buy all of the food they need for health or cultural reasons, numbers that are much higher than the national rate.

A 2014 report by PROOF, titled “*Household food insecurity in Canada 2012*,” states that the prevalence of household food insecurity in the City of Toronto in 2011-2012 was 11.96 per cent<sup>7</sup>. Again, the responses to our consultations give a number that is much higher than the rest of the city.

This same report outlines certain factors that put a community at a higher risk for food insecurity prevalence. One of these is housing. According to the report, 26.1 per cent of households renting their accommodation experienced food insecurity versus 6.4 per cent of homeowners. Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park are predominantly rental communities with over 30 high and low-rise buildings in each neighbourhood. According to the 2011 Neighbourhood Demographics by the City of Toronto, 83 per cent of private dwelling structure type in Flemingdon Park are apartments. In Thorncliffe Park, this number is 99 per cent.

Another important factor pertained to whether the household member was a recent immigrant to Canada. In their study population, people who immigrated within the previous 5 years experienced a food insecurity rate of 19.6 per cent. According to the City of Toronto, 22 per cent of residents in Thorncliffe Park and 26 per cent of residents in Flemingdon Park immigrated to Canada within the last 5 years.

Studies show that food insecurity is strongly linked to poor health and an increased risk for disease. While rates of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity are increasing in all populations, a recent study in BMJ Open shows that this is occurring more in South Asian, Chinese, and Black communities in Ontario<sup>8</sup>, three of the top five visible minority groups in Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park. This study shows that as inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption increases within these populations, so does disease.

The data from our community consultations show that in comparison to municipal, provincial, and national statistics, Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park are at an increased risk for food insecurity and have a higher rate of residents in food insecure households. It also shows that due to this food insecurity, residents of Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park face much stronger threat of health issues and disease.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-624-x/2015001/article/14138-eng.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/5/8/e007232.full?sid=4d7fc947-c7ea-4a7e-80a8-16f6684ca7cd>

## 4.2 LEVELS OF FOOD INSECURITY

Opinions and experiences with food security in Flemingdon Park is all over the spectrum. There is a large number of participants in this study who don't seem to have any trouble finding affordable, quality, and culturally appropriate foods, whereas for another large group appears to struggle. Those who struggle do so to varying degrees. Some only struggle to find specific foods desired to fulfill personal needs and either do without or find alternatives. On the other hand, there are some who are so food insecure that they are perusing open fields to collect wild vegetables and spices.

"Sometimes we go to the fields to pick up wild vegetables"

In Thorncliffe Park, the experience of food security is similar to that in Flemingdon Park. For some, the affordability and availability of foods does not present any difficulties while others find it to be a consistent challenge. But even amongst those who are not having trouble, there is a worry that their situation could change due to rising food prices.

"17 years ago when I came here, we would go shopping and a whole grocery cart full of food would be \$100. Now, there are only four bags and nothing inside them and it costs \$100"

Some in Flemingdon Park rely on community-based food organizations such as food banks and community kitchens to help meet their basic and immediate dietary needs but find that even these programs aren't completely satisfactory. They provide limited food options and can only satisfy their needs for a short while. Even with their immediate needs fulfilled, their nutritional needs may still be neglected.

Residents of Thorncliffe Park feel that there is a lack of food-based organizations in their neighbourhood to turn to for assistance. While some knew of the Thorncliffe Food Bank, most did not know of any other food programs. Some mentioned that they had heard of classes (e.g. peer nutrition program) but none knew enough about them to actually attend. Many spoke about programs they knew of in Flemingdon Park, wondering why they did not have similar programs in their community.

"Some people are going into debt trying to feed their families."

## 4.3 REASONS FOR FOOD INSECURITY

There are (4) identified causes for food insecurity in Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park: high cost of foods, the availability of foods or lack thereof, the poor quality of foods available, and insufficient education about foods. The following is a discussion on these four themes.

### 4.3.1 HIGH COST OF FOODS

High cost of foods was the prominent reason given for their struggles with food security. The participants encountered challenges to living a food secure life because fresh and/or organic

foods are expensive to acquire. They purchased foods that were filling but devoid of nutritive value. One respondent said that just having access to foods is not enough.

“Like for potato and rice, it is cheaper and it fills our stomach, right? and this kind of vegetables and fruits are expensive and even if we eat much, we still feel light so it is costly.”

Starchy foods such as rice and potatoes may be affordable and may meet their sustenance needs however, they are not getting the nutrition their body needs to function and grow. Although they may be eating foods that satisfy their hunger, they recognize that eating foods that are devoid of nutritional elements have long term consequences. Another respondent implied in her answer that the foods she ate may have contributed to some of her ailments and once she corrected her eating habits by incorporating more vegetables and less oil, sugar and sodium in her diet, her health improved significantly.

“We are cooking healthy foods and we are learning how we eat healthy foods to have a good life. I learn a lot of things about the community. I learn about the nutrition. You learn about how much it has in calories, sodium which is good. How much you should eat, drink. This is good because when I come here before when I was sick. I have high blood pressure. I have cholesterol but now I am ok because I volunteer many places and I come here. Now I cook at home. Not too much oil. I eat a lot of vegetable.”

For those who buy Halal foods, affordability presents another challenge. The price of these foods, especially meat, are higher than non-Halal foods. Many respondents feel that the stores that sell Halal foods take advantage of the fact that their customers cannot buy their food elsewhere and consequently mark up their prices. Moreover, they say that these stores rarely have sales. To cut down on the price of groceries many people end up buying less nutritious options, especially when it comes to cuts of meat, yet still end up with relatively high grocery bills.

“I cannot take whatever I want. I have to have Halal so my grocery bill is always higher than other families.”

#### 4.3.2 AVAILABILITY OF FOODS

The majority of participants in these community consultations are from South Asian backgrounds, which accurately reflects the make-up of both neighbourhoods. Most of these respondents report that they are satisfied with the availability of culturally appropriate foods. However, many respondents complained that some culturally specific foods are not available and that they sometimes travel up to approximately 1 hour to get to a store that is stocked with the food variety they need. For instance, residents who are from West African and Caribbean descent all spoke of being unable to find culturally appropriate foods in both neighbourhoods. Many of them say they travel to the West End of Toronto to buy these foods because it is either an area they are familiar with or they do not know if these same stores exist in the East End.

“Nigerian foods are not here. I eat whatever they have here. If I want to eat my cultural food, I have to travel out of the neighbourhood. I go to the West End to get the stuff, maybe once a month. I use fruits and vegetables in this area to support the food I get once a month in the West End.”

Residents from Western European backgrounds report that there are foods they miss from their home countries but they make do with what is available in their neighbourhood rather than go elsewhere. One respondent said that he has family members who buy the foods he wants

elsewhere in the city and brings them to him because the cultural foods available in the neighbourhood, in his opinion, are not authentic.

There were some exceptions even amongst the South Asian respondents who expressed being satisfied with the availability of culturally appropriate foods. A few mentioned the difficulty of finding certain halal foods, especially dairy products and baked goods. Some would like to see more Halal fast food options. Respondents from Bangladesh stated that they were unable to find certain foods such as particular fishes and vegetables in the neighbourhood. They travel to stores on the Danforth to buy these foods. Many participants spoke of inconsistency in finding certain foods in grocery stores. For those who are looking to buy organic foods or special diet foods (e.g. lactose-free, gluten-free), sometimes the items they need are available and other times they are not. This can make grocery shopping and meal planning difficult.

“You do not find organic here. Lactose free or almond milk is difficult. (One store) carries it but half the time it isn’t there.”

While it is understood that not everyone can be satisfied with the availability of culturally and nutritionally appropriate foods where they live and that they will have to go elsewhere for what they need, it is more difficult for residents of areas like Flemingdon Park and Thorncliffe Park. Most residents of these neighbourhoods are accustomed to walking to the grocery stores. To travel elsewhere is an additional expense. Those who do not own a vehicle or a Metropass and who are already struggling financially to put food on the table are experiencing yet another burden. The cost of transportation, even for short distances, to purchased needed foods is another financial consideration the participants of this study mentioned struggling with.

“...and then it costs us more because we jump from here and jump there.  
You pick up a certain amount here and then you go there...”

#### 4.3.3 QUALITY OF FOODS

The quality and freshness of food is something that all participants showed concern for. In both surveys and focus groups, the topic of expired foods came up often. Participants report finding expired foods on shelves at the grocery store, buying foods that spoil the day after they bring them home, and finding foods with no expiry dates on them.

“Sometimes my husband buys onion and potato and I found that most of the potato and onions are rotting.  
It’s inside the bag and you cannot tell. After 2-3 days you find rotten foods.”

Many feel that when foods are put on sale, they are already expired or near the expiry date. When the affordability of food is a concern, this makes shopping more difficult. Some feel that it is a choice between price or quality.

“They are taking our money but they are not giving us hygienic, healthy things.”

Others state that they do their grocery shopping one day at a time to ensure that nothing they purchase goes bad. Some express difficulty at speaking up at stores when it comes to the quality of the food they are purchasing. With a limited choice of stores to shop at, they hesitate at

speaking up out of the fear that they will no longer be treated well or unable to shop at that store. Some who have spoken up say that they had very difficult times returning expired foods.

“We buy the things usually from there but after bringing home, if something is not fresh, we can't go there to return it as instead of exchange or refund they start arguing. So I don't go there for exchange or refund because if there's a dispute, I won't be able to go to the store further but I need to go there for most of my groceries.”

#### 4.3.4 LACK OF SUFFICIENT EDUCATION ABOUT FOODS

Lack of education was another reason given for the women's struggles with living food secure lives. On the one hand, lack of education in how to prepare foods they eat regularly, in a healthy way, contributes to their struggles with food security. One respondent mentioned it may have contributed to her battle with a couple of non-communicable diseases. On the other hand, lack of education in how to prepare foods using unfamiliar fresh produce was said to also limit their ability to live food secure lives. Respondents repeatedly mentioned wanting more workshops on nutrition, best gardening practices (summer and winter), healthy cooking practices (cultural foods included), and preserving produce for the winter months. A respondent from a community kitchen explains the importance of food education:

“I think that is the good example because if you just tell the people they have so many things in their heads and they will forget or they don't want to do it. So if you show them like here it's something good because it is more accessible to them and they know how to do it. But if they show you or if you show them there you are going to get this and you are going to make this. It like more.. I think ideas like that are more helpful for the people.”

Community kitchens play an integral role in the lives of many Flemington Park residents. They are an opportunity for people to learn how to cook healthy foods that are unfamiliar to them. It is also a place for them to learn best cooking practices for foods that they normally cook at home. For instance, reducing oil and sodium consumption, substituting sugars for healthier alternatives, and incorporating more vegetables in meals are all things that the many of the participants mentioned changing in their routine since coming to this program.

Another food education program mentioned by the residents of Flemington Park takes place at the Flemington Food Bank, where an apprentice nutritionist comes in once a week to prepare healthy recipes using foods available at the food bank and serves samples to the centres clients along with a recipe sheet. The nutritionist uses foods (fresh produce for instance that people would normally either return or throw outside of the building) to educate the clients on how to incorporate them in their meals and the health benefits of the food item.

Many also want to learn how to navigate a food system that is new to them. Many spoke of not understanding how to read the food labels to find out the nutritional value of the packaged foods they eat. Others mentioned knowing that there is a difference between conventional and chemical-free foods but not fully understanding it or how to tell the difference. Some expressed the troubles they have navigating the grocery stores and wanting someone who could guide them through it and point out what they should be eating or skipping.



Although this discussion on education deviates from its original intention of gaining insight into the respondents understanding and challenges regarding food access, it is still relevant to the study in so far as it indicates that education about healthy foods is just as important as is their ability to access it. Moreover, this discussion reveals that Community Kitchen gatherings contribute to improving its participants health beyond the physical.

“Family, friends and a feeling of belonging to a community give people the sense of being a part of something larger than themselves. Satisfaction with self and community, problem-solving capabilities and the ability to manage life situations can contribute to better health overall.” The extent to which people participate in their community and feel that they belong can positively influence their long-term physical and mental health.”

The human connection element improves their state of mind. It gets them out of the house, forming new friendships and networks, which in turn they say has led to learning about volunteer and employment opportunities. They also said that it is an opportunity for them to practice and improve their English which is instrumental in helping them integrate into local society. When you feel better, you do better. Overall, it improves their quality of life.

This same experience is felt in Thorncliffe Park where community gardens have become a popular gathering spot for residents. Those who garden in either public spaces or on private property speak to how they have not only been given the ability to grow their own food but become a stronger part of the community. Residents share and learn from each other and get to know their neighbours, which can be difficult to do in large neighbourhoods. Food is shared between gardeners and their neighbours and participants feel a sense of ownership within their community.

## CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

The top recommendations given by the respondents include a variation of the following:

### 5.1 Food Map

Many participants, especially in focus groups, spoke of the need to have all food-related information in one place. This would include neighbourhood stores, food trucks, and programs as well as places outside of the neighbourhood where people can go to find foods from their cultures. In 2014, two students with FTFSN put together a food map for the Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park neighbourhoods. This project should be expanded to include all of this information. The food map can be made available to all residents through community organizations, the Community Centres and Libraries or through the apartment buildings, either in a common space or given to residents when they move in.

### 5.2 Food Education

Most of the participants mentioned a desire to learn more about foods. Their requests varied from wanting to learn more about how to cook healthy meals and healthier versions of their ethnic foods, to learning about portion control, to learning about food handling practices, preserving fresh produce for the winter, gardening and some even mentioned consumer rights protection education. Food related and consumer rights education can help individuals and families live healthier lives.

### 5.3 Food Hub

A food hub would accommodate not just those that seek education and affordable foods. Instead, it is also a place where people can meet and exchange ideas & experiences with fellow residents. It is a place where children as well as adults can learn about & grow foods. It is also a place where job training about food, food handling and/or all that is involved in maintaining a food hub can but it also provides individuals with the skills they need to secure jobs for sustainable livelihoods, through volunteering opportunities and workshop series. It can also create employment opportunities for local residents.

### 5.4 Community Gardens/Balcony Gardening Program

While there are currently three community gardens in Thorncliffe Park and one in Flemingdon Park, they do not meet the demand for gardening spaces. Many people in the neighbourhood have grown their own food back home and would like to continue to do so in Canada. Many respondents stated that they would like to see the gardens at 71 Thorncliffe Park Drive on the property of their buildings, but are unsure of how to create and fund such a project on their own. Supporting the management companies in making gardening spaces available on their properties and supporting the residents in securing funding and the means to create these spaces would allow many more residents the opportunity to grow their own food. This would be an excellent use of unused green space throughout the neighbourhood.

A balcony gardening program would also assist residents who want to grow their own food but do not have a space in community gardens. This program would teach residents how to grow vegetables on their balconies and could be supported and delivered by local gardeners.

### 5.5 Food Trucks

This is one of the most common requests made by the participants, mostly because they have either seen or heard about it in other neighbourhoods. Food trucks, especially those that are mobile can help cut the consumers cost on travel. Leaving them with money they can use to either purchase more food for their families or to put towards other bills which they struggle paying for.

### 5.6 Food Markets

Various kinds of food markets were requested by the participants of this study. Many asked for foods that accommodated the health concerns such as lactose-free, sugar-free & organic. While others asked for culturally conscious foods such as halal or specific produce indigenous to their native lands such as Chinese chives, tandoori, & halal foods to name a few. All asked for affordable and quality foods to be made available at this food market. Many asked for Farmer's Markets similar to those in other areas of Toronto. Currently, the markets that are close to the community are not within walking distance and involve taking more than one bus to get there. Bringing farmers into the neighbourhood would give residents more access to fresh food and help them to better participate in the local food system.

### 5.7 Food Share Good Food Box

The Good Food Box from Food Share is a project that many residents are interested in. It has been run in the neighbourhoods in the past but many residents were unaware of it. The program is often run by residents, though those individuals have found it difficult to maintain and give up the program. Ideally, a community organization would take over the running of the program, taking and placing orders, and giving residents a central spot to pick up their boxes from.

### 5.8 Door-to-Door Delivery

This request came mostly from senior citizens who complained that they struggle to bring foods home and tend to make many trips in order to bring home all the groceries they need. Carrying foods is especially problematic in the winter months.



## CONCLUSION

When we look at recent studies on food insecurity in Canada, there are clear indications that residents of Flemington Park and Thorncliffe Park are vulnerable to food insecurity. When we look at the data from these community consultations, we see that this is true. Approximately half of the participants have difficulties putting food on the table. The community lacks the access to food other neighbourhoods enjoy and what they do have access to is often poor in quality or too expensive. In a neighbourhood where almost half of residents spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing alone, feeding their families should not be just another worry. These two neighbourhoods cannot be identified as food secure and need more support in accessing fresh, affordable, and culturally appropriate food.

## **APPENDICES**

### **A. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

#### **FLEMINGDON PARK AND THORNCLIFFE PARK**

2. When we think about shopping for food in our neighbourhood what words (not necessarily places) come to mind?
3. When I mention the term “food security,” what do you think this means?
4. (If participants need prompting, give them the following definition: A community enjoys food security when all people, at all times, have access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable, and culturally appropriate foods, produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just. - BC Food Systems Network. Ask participants what this would mean in their community.)
5. Based on what we have established food security is, do you think your neighbourhood is food secure?
6. Are you satisfied with the availability of fresh, affordable food in your neighbourhood? What about culturally appropriate food? What is missing from the neighbourhood?
7. What programs/services exist in the community to help residents gain access to food besides going to the grocery store? How do people find out about these projects? What do you think are barriers to accessing these projects?
8. What programs/projects do you think would help you and your neighbours enjoy healthy and affordable food that satisfies their cultural and health demands?
9. To sum up, what would make you and your neighbourhood more food secure?

## **B. KITCHEN TABLE TALK QUESTIONS**

### **FLEMINGDON PARK**

1. When we think about shopping for food in our neighbourhood, what words come to mind? (not necessarily places but it could be access, quality, etc...)
2. When I mention food security, what do you think this means?
3. (Food security according to FAO is when all people at all times have access to nutritious, safe, and culturally acceptable foods at all times)
4. Based on the definitions you have given me, do you think that Flemington Park is food secure?
5. Are you satisfied with the availability of fresh & affordable foods in Flemington Park? What about appropriate foods? What is missing from the neighbourhoods?
6. Besides grocery stores, what programs or services exist in the community that help residents gain access to food? (E.g. food bank, farmers market, food trucks, etc...)
7. How do people find out about these projects? What are barriers to accessing these projects?
8. What programs/projects do you think will help you and your neighbours enjoy healthy and affordable food that satisfies cultural and health demands.

### **THORNCLIFFE PARK**

1. Where in the neighbourhood do you shop for food?
2. How do you go to get your groceries?
3. How much time do you spend getting to the grocery stores?
4. Are there any food items for health or cultural reasons that you cannot get in the neighbourhood?
5. Do you find each month that you have enough money to buy all the food you need or want to have?
6. Do any of you grow your own food?
7. What food related programs or services do you know of in the neighbourhood?
8. Are there any projects that you would like to see in the neighbourhood that you have seen elsewhere?
9. What do you think will bring about change in this neighbourhood to help everyone become more food secure?

## C. SURVEY QUESTIONS

### FOOD SECURITY SURVEY: FLEMINGDON PARK AND THORNCLIFFE PARK

<b>Gender:</b> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Resident of:</b> Thorncliffe Park <input type="checkbox"/> Flemingdon Park <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Household Size (number of people that live with you in your home):</b> _____	<b>Number of years you have lived in this community:</b> _____
<b>What languages do you speak?</b> _____	
<b>What language/s do you speak at home?</b> _____	

**1. What stores, restaurants and markets do you use in your neighbourhood? (please list them)**

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**Check all that apply:**

Car ☐    Public Transit ☐    Bike ☐  
Walk ☐    Taxi ☐    Other (e.g. scooter) ☐

**2. What transportation do you use to get food?**

**3. How long does it take to get to these locations?**

5.    minutes or less ☐    5-10 minutes ☐    more than 10 minutes ☐

4. Are there any food items that you need for health reasons (e.g. lactose-free, diabetic, organic) that are not available in your neighbourhood?

**If you answered yes, please answer these additional questions:**

4.1 Please provide examples of what is not available:

4.2 Do you go somewhere else to get these items:

Yes ☐ No ☐

4.3 If you answered yes to questions 4.2, how long does it take you to get to the store/s that sell/s the food that you need?

15 minutes ☐ 30 minutes ☐ 1 hour or more ☐

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. Are there any food items that you need for cultural reasons (e.g. halal) that are not available in your neighbourhood?

**If you answered yes, please answer these additional questions:**

5.1 Please provide examples of what is not available:

5.2 Do you go somewhere else to get these items:

Yes ☐ No ☐

5.3 If you answered yes to questions 5.2, how long does it take you to get to the store/s that sell/s the food that you need?

15 minutes ☐ 30 minutes ☐ 1 hour or more ☐

Yes ☐ No ☐

6. After your regular monthly expenses (e.g. rent, transportation) do you have enough money to buy all the food items that you need for health and/or cultural reasons?

Yes ☐ No ☐

- 
- 1.1. If you answered No, how often do you not have enough to purchase all the food items you need?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐

**7. Do you grow any food (herbs, vegetables) at a garden or on your balcony?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

If not, would you be interested in this?

Yes ☐ No ☐

**8. Do you know about any food related programs/services in the community? For example: community kitchen, food bank, community garden, etc.**

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐

**If you answered "yes" to question 8, please answer the following questions:**

**8.1 how did you find out about these programs/services:**

Friends/family ☐

Neighbours ☐

Place of worship (church, mosque, temple, etc.) ☐

Community service organization (e.g. health centre, language school, employment program, childcare centre, library, etc.) ☐

**8.2 How could these programs be improved? (e.g. more hours/different hours of operation, other programs/services)**

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**If you answered "no", to question 8 please tell us why you don't know about these programs:**

I am not interested in such programs ☐

I don't speak English very well ☐

I rarely go to community centres ☐

9. Do you know about any projects in other communities that people in your neighbourhood would like to have? If so, please list them (e.g. farmers' markets, food trucks, etc.)

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10. Please list 1 to 3 ideas that you think could help you and your neighbours enjoy healthy affordable food that satisfies their cultural and health demands:

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11. Other Comments/Suggestions:

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME!**

If you would like to learn about the survey results and receive information about food related programs/services, please provide your contact information:

**Name:**

**E-mail:**

**Telephone:**

**Confidentiality Statement:**

This is to confirm that your personal information (name, e-mail, phone number) **will ONLY be used** for the purposes of sharing the results of our research and information about food related programs and services. Your personal information **will NOT be published**. We **will NOT** share your personal information with anyone outside of our project team.

## D. DEMOGRAPHICS

### FLEMINGDON PARK

### THORNCLIFFE PARK

Please see Attachments

