Community Based Development in Rideau Heights: The Case for a Community-Driven Storefront Initiative

Diane Tan
Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
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Executive Summary

Rideau Heights is a neighbourhood situated in northern Kingston (see Chapter 3, Figure 3-1, pg. 15) that experiences significantly lower incomes, educational attainment, and employment rates as compared to other neighbourhoods in the city (City of Kingston, 2014). Community members express concern with deteriorating housing conditions, low incomes, criminal activity in the neighbourhood, geographic inaccessibility of services, and the negative stigmas associated with the name “Rideau Heights”. On the other hand, residents also identify the quantity of support services available as well as the strong social networks between community members as valuable assets to the neighbourhood (Melles & Cleary, 2010; Meagher, 2007). Furthermore, a reinvestment of infrastructure and public amenities to the neighbourhood is currently underway as part of the Rideau Heights Regeneration project. The objective is to upgrade aging housing stock, introduce a social mix, and implement effective land-use planning principles to the neighbourhood. (City of Kingston Housing Department, 2012).

This research will explore three approaches to community development that may be collectively considered in addressing community challenges in Rideau Heights: asset-based community development (ABCD), Collective Impact, and resident-led development. ABCD is a strengths-based strategy that focuses on the existing assets of a community and encourages citizens to take ownership of their own development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Collective Impact is a method that encourages various services to work as one entity under a centralized infrastructure and shared vision (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Resident-led community development focuses on the value of informal initiatives and empowering individual community members to develop their own solutions to community challenges.
One particular model, the Storefront model, can be used to leverage the existing assets and resident engagement to fuel community-driven development. Based on the East Scarborough Storefront (ESS), a storefront can be described as a physical space within the neighbourhood that is accessible for all members of the community. It is shared between storefront administrative individuals and numerous social service agencies. This allows for better coordination amongst service delivery to provide comprehensive and flexible support for clients in a one-stop hub (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010). Beyond this, a storefront has a unique governance structure in that decision-making boards include 50% representation by community members, allowing the empowerment of community residents in leading the direction of service delivery and ultimately, their own community development in partnership with key service providers (Roche & Roberts, 2007).

A group visioning workshop was held with 12 residents of Rideau Heights, most of whom were members of the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) for Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation and living within the public housing community. The workshop looked to obtain perspectives on existing community and individual assets, solutions to neighbourhood challenges, and tactical actions that community members may take on as part of these solutions. Additionally, interviews were conducted with four service providers in Rideau Heights, including representatives from Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation, Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns, Kingston Community Health Centres, and KFL&A United Way. These semi-structured interviews helped to identify how challenges in the neighbourhood were being addressed, how collaboration was structured amongst the organizations, and what kinds of community-driven development took place in the neighbourhood.
**Findings**

The interviews and workshop together identified the most significant lived challenges in the neighbourhood. Many of these were reflected from the background reports, including issues with negative stigma, prevalence of crime, and lack of community involvement. Together, these challenges are cycled within the neighbourhood time and again due to the inability to find sustainable solutions to address root issues. Residents and agencies also pointed to an abundance of assets, including individual skill sets, the quantity of support services available, the quality of social cohesion, and the reinvestment from the City of Kingston through the Rideau Heights Regeneration plan. Areas for improvement were identified as the lack of effective outreach by agencies as well as social divisions amongst residents within the community. Workshop participants thoroughly discussed a number of initiatives that may be implemented by residents in addressing community issues including a neighbourhood watch program and community organized recreational programming. Agencies recognized the value of resident driven initiatives, but indicated the need for funding sources as well as a formal structure to coordinate and sustain such initiatives.

**Recommended actions**

As a means to address many of the community’s challenges, a storefront initiative may bring to light all of the potential that exists in Rideau Heights for asset-based development, collective action, and resident-driven development. As a structure, a storefront initiative may begin as an advisory group that represents the community desires and inform decisions made by external agencies and institutions that affect the community. The group would also work to take on initiatives of their own, using community assets to respond to community needs and desires.
With the evolution of a successful advisory group, establishing a physical location would ensure the accessibility of resident-driven development to all residents of the neighbourhood. The advisory group may begin to partner with community service agencies that can support various initiatives being run out of the storefront.

Regardless of structure, having a paid facilitator present is essential as community-driven development begins to evolve. The facilitator would coordinate resident initiatives and organize collective action between agencies towards a larger, common goal. This ensures accountability and administrative support for storefront initiatives while community members and service agencies can focus on running their operations.

Two physical locations were identified as a potential space for such an initiative. A storefront may be successful as part of the new community centre or as part of the re-establishment of the Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation (KFHC) satellite office. Both locations are central to the neighbourhood and incorporate anchor amenities that draw community members to the site.

The following are a set of recommended actions for initiating a storefront initiative in Rideau Heights organized between actions for residents, and actions for agencies and public institutions:

**Residents**

1. **Don’t ask for permission, ask for support.** Community members can become accustomed to rely on programs and agencies to lead community initiatives, acting as consumers of programs rather than citizens of their own community (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Rather than waiting for agencies to develop an initiative,
residents should take the lead to organize and develop projects themselves, asking agencies for financial and resource support.

2. **Think bigger.** The Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) is a good starting point for a community advisory group, but should look to start growing and include diverse members of the community. Further initiatives need to begin to look beyond the support that is provided by KFHC and encompass more than just concerns relating to tenants and public housing.

3. **Establish a structure.** It is vital to establish a governance structure to determine the nature of the group and how it will function. Formalizing a decision-making process is important, either through an appointed body of members, or as a group-wide voting process. An established, structured group holds accountability for initiatives suggested by residents. This lends credibility, momentum, and the human capital support required to sustain a project to its successful implementation.

4. **Connect with other residents.** Creating connections as a member of an established group will further legitimize the cause, create awareness of initiatives, and expand the pool of social and human capital. It is important that any engagement involve a diversity of residents, including youth, seniors, single parents and private renters/homeowners.

5. **Connect with more agencies.** Creating collaborative partnerships and coalitions with service agencies is vital in receiving supportive resources as well as creating respectful relationships that garner the recognition of legitimacy as a community group.

**Agencies**

1. **Reconsider funding structures.** Storefront initiatives are unconventional in nature and can be informal, unstructured, or sometimes one-off with no tangible or
measurable results. This makes it difficult to secure traditional funding. If funding agencies and public institutions recognize the value behind informal community-driven initiatives, a separate stream of funding could be made available for such initiatives.

2. **Consider resident-ownership of programs.** Agencies in Rideau Heights as well as the Rideau Heights Regeneration team should identify different opportunities where community residents may be able to provide some level of governance or even adopt and take responsibility for some initiatives (e.g. KFHC’s spring community clean-up). With the Regeneration plan creating and re-configuring community space, this is an opportunity to introduce some level of resident decision-making into the plans for the neighbourhood.

3. **Continue outreach and provide support, not enforcement.** Big picture decision-making for storefront initiatives should be in the hands of community members with advice and support from external bodies if necessary. This will require ongoing communication between all involved parties (including residents, agencies, and the City), which would encourage relationship building over time. Eventually, building that bridge will benefit overall outreach to a wider population for many agencies.

4. **Go beyond collaboration and work towards a Collective Impact.** Agencies in Rideau Heights are collaborating well, however, a concerted Collective Impact effort can improve the effectiveness of programs as a whole for community members. Through the storefront, a Collective Impact may be achieved if service agencies are flexible and commit the time and resources required. Some modifications to programming may be necessary to mutually reinforce the activities and goals of the Collective Impact.
Considerations and next steps towards a storefront

A recurring lesson from this research is the need to start small and have patience for any community-driven development initiative. Recognizing that the process may take longer than expected and focusing on one initiative at a time can better ensure that there is follow through with successful results. Starting small with few resources will require utilizing existing individual as well as community assets. Looking within the community can enhance the community ownership of the initiative and require fewer resources to operate.

Finally, now is the time to act. With the Rideau Heights Regeneration plan underway, changes to the neighbourhood can create space for resident initiatives as part of the new structure, such as a storefront space, more recreation space, or more natural surveillance. The neighbourhood for the first time has the attention of key players that recognize the value of resident input and are interested to support community development. Having this spotlight creates a prime opportunity to both advocate for external support and finally create positive associations with the neighbourhood.

The following provides three examples of proposed resident-led initiatives that provide a good first step towards a storefront initiative:

- **Informal recreation league for neighbourhood youth and adults.** Whether it is sports or hobbies (softball, fishing, etc.), the informal structure can be flexible around resident schedules and build informal youth mentorship to strengthen the community.

- **Clean up the community campaign.** In addition to community clean up days, residents can also collaborate to decorate community-owned garbage bins in areas of high litter to establish community ownership and identity.
Neighbourhood watch program. Residents may meet to discuss ongoing or one-off suspicious activities they observe in their complexes and establish a relationship with the Kingston Police.

All in all, the community of Rideau Heights is now at a tipping point for more effective, community-driven development. The pieces are all in place to establish a storefront initiative that may bring together the immense potential that exists in Rideau Heights to move towards a well-connected, hospitable community that residents are proud to call home.
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Introduction

Rideau Heights is a neighbourhood situated in northern Kingston that contains a high concentration of public housing units. This neighbourhood experiences the greatest proportion of low income families, lone parent families and lowest labour force participation rates in the city. Historically, Rideau Heights has been associated with negative perceptions, with residents internalizing the stigma of living in this neighbourhood (Melles & Cleary, 2010; Meagher, 2007). With these challenges, many support services are available and present in the community. However, improvements can be made to provide more effective outreach, flexibility of service delivery, and collective action between the various services (Melles & Cleary, 2010).

Given the challenges, Rideau Heights also contains numerous assets as a community. There is potential to foster meaningful development to address the challenges that are characteristic of this neighbourhood. Individual assets, presence of trusted service agencies, and a reinvestment from the City of Kingston lays groundwork for effective community-driven development.

This research will explore three approaches to community development that may be collectively considered in addressing community challenges in Rideau Heights. The first includes asset-based community (ABCD) development. This focuses on existing assets of a community as a starting point for development with an emphasis on the social networks that strengthen and bond social capital. The second approach involves Collective Impact, which puts an emphasis on various services in a neighbourhood to work as one entity under a centralized system consisting of ongoing commitment and shared measurable outcomes. The third approach will examine community-led
initiatives that focus on resident empowerment and leadership amongst informal community initiatives that work towards overall community development.

One particular model, the Storefront model, can be used to leverage the existing assets and resident engagement to fuel community-driven development. A storefront can be described as a physical drop-in space for residents within the neighbourhood that is shared between storefront administration and numerous social service agencies. The shared space allows for better coordination amongst service delivery to provide comprehensive and flexible support for clients in a one-stop hub (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010). Beyond this, a storefront has a unique governance structure in that decision-making boards include 50% representation by community members, allowing the empowerment of community residents in leading the direction of service delivery and driving their own development (Roche & Roberts, 2007). The East Scarborough Neighbourhood Storefront in Toronto is a strong example of the Storefront model and is a case study worthy of further examination for its potential replicability in other jurisdictions.

Research questions

Together, there are three questions that guide this research:

- What is a storefront community development initiative and how does it work?
- What lessons can be applied from community development approaches and the East Scarborough Storefront initiative?
- How can a successful storefront initiative be implemented in Rideau Heights?

The first two guiding questions will be answered through an analysis of the community development literature as well as the East Scarborough Storefront case
study. The third guiding question and the forward thinking aspect of this research will be answered through interviews and a workshop.

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with key service providers present in the Rideau Heights neighbourhood. Participants provided insight on programs available to residents, the level of collective action between agencies, and the extent of engagement and resident governance present in the organizations programming. Central to this research was the involvement of Rideau Heights community members in providing input on the feasibility of community-driven development and what it may look like. A visioning workshop was held with 12 participants consisting mostly of members of a neighbourhood Tenant Advisory Group, all living within Rideau Heights public housing.

**Report structure**

This report is organized into eight chapters. Following the introduction, Chapter 2 describes the methodologies used to conduct this research, including the limitations and biases encountered in the process. Chapter 3 gives detail on the neighbourhood of Rideau Heights, including demographic data, existing conditions (challenges and assets), and future plans for the neighbourhood. Chapter 4 discusses the academic literature behind the three themes of this research: asset-based community development, Collective Impact, and resident-led development. Chapter 5 consists of the detailed case study of the East Scarborough Storefront in Toronto. This case study examines what a storefront model for community development is, and what lessons can be taken to apply to the Rideau Heights context. Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of this research from key informant interviews and the visioning workshop, organized into the three research themes. Chapter 7 outlines a number of considerations and recommendations for residents and agencies in establishing a
storefront initiative. This chapter ends with next steps that outline proposed initiatives which residents may take on as part of community-driven development.
2.0 Methodology

Introduction

The methodology employed for this research had four main components: a literature review; a case study of the East Scarborough Storefront; a visioning workshop with Rideau Heights community members; and four key informant interviews. The triangulation of these methods that each drew from multiple sources helped to strengthen the construct validity and rigour of this research (Yin, 2009).

Literature Review

Grey Literature

A grey literature review was conducted to obtain background information on Rideau Heights and the existing challenges. Key documents included assessments done by local agencies including the Kingston Community Health Centre’s (from herein KCHC) community needs assessment (Melles & Cleary, 2010), Public Interest’s community engagement strategy (Meagher, 2007), and the City of Kingston Housing Department’s background information report (2012). These documents, supplemented by Census statistics, helped to outline the existing situation in Rideau Heights.

Community Development Literature

A body of research about community development was explored in depth in order to understand the theoretical approaches to community development. The first of these approaches included asset-based community development (ABCD) drawn from key literature by Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) and Mathie & Cunningham (2003). The ABCD method prioritizes citizen-led initiatives, dispelling the client/provider relationships to encourage citizens to take ownership of their own development. This
strengths-based strategy focuses on the existing assets of a community as a starting point for development, with an emphasis on the social networks that strengthen social capital and build bonds within a community.

The second approach studied in this research is Collective Impact, largely influenced by the key literature by Kania & Kramer (2011). This method highlights the collaborative element of this study, where there is emphasis placed on various services to work as one entity under a centralized infrastructure. This component is critical to understanding the need for a shared vision and ongoing commitment in a community development initiative such as a storefront.

The last approach as part of this research is the component for resident-led, community-driven development. This is an integral element of this research that addresses the power differentials present in many service-driven approaches and outlines the value of informal initiatives and empowering individual community members.

Case Study & Rationale

The storefront model of the East Scarborough Storefront (ESS) served as the single case study for this research. To justify the use of a single case study, an idiographic approach was employed in understanding the multifaceted processes to a storefront initiative. An idiographic research approach in this context can be described as depth-oriented, focusing on a particular case study in greater detail, as opposed to studying a breadth of case studies in less detail (Baxter, 2010). The ESS served as the backbone for a storefront model that was dissected and reformed by community development literature and further developed to address and respond to the context-specific nature of Rideau Heights.
Research on the ESS included a literature review of available reports documenting the process for implementing the storefront initiative and factors leading to its success. The bulk of material for this came from a book released by the ESS (Mann, 2010) that outlined the storefront’s history and structure of operations, as well as ESS annual reports.

This Master report’s case study of the ESS examined questions such as:

- What is a storefront initiative, how does it operate and what are the critical elements?
- What challenges did they face? And how were they overcome or addressed?
- What factors have sustained their success through time?
- What lessons can be taken from the storefront that may be generalizable to another context?

This case study provided an in-depth understanding of how the storefront approach was successful in the context of the Kingston Galloway/Orton Park neighbourhood. The lessons learned from this case aided in understanding community based development to apply to similar neighbourhoods such as Rideau Heights (Baxter, 2010; Yin, 2009).

**Group visioning workshop**

With respect to the objective of this research in developing a community-driven initiative, it was important to the researcher (Diane Tan) to consider elements of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is rooted in its goal “not just to describe or analyze social reality, but to help change it” (Kindon, 2010, p. 260). Its purpose is to equip marginalized populations with the necessary leverage to achieve meaningful social transformation through active involvement of research participants (Kindon, 2010). These procedural outcomes are an objective that this research strives to uphold as a common thread throughout the research process.
As a part of this objective, a group visioning workshop was held with residents of Rideau Heights, specifically those living within the public housing community. The rationale for exclusively including public housing residents was two-fold. First, residents of public housing were more accessible in attending the workshop for the researcher. Having worked and volunteered with the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) in the six months prior to undertaking the research, the researcher had an established relationship with TAG members. These members are tenants living within the Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation’s (KFHC) Rideau Heights public housing units. TAG members attend meetings lead by KFHC property management once a month to discuss neighbourhood issues and updates. The second reason for extending the focus group invitation to only public housing residents is because this group of residents includes people who experience the magnitude of challenges characteristic of the neighbourhood. Crime, unemployment, negative stigma, and overall defeatist outlooks are most prevalent amongst the public housing population of Rideau Heights.

A fellow classmate assisted in the set-up, facilitation, and record keeping components of the workshop, making it possible for the researcher to focus on overall coordination and ensuring participants were on course. The session was run with elements used to conduct focus groups including strategies to accommodate and facilitate effective dialogue between participants (Cameron, 2010). However, this research is primarily concerned with envisioning strategies for implementing an initiative. Wates (2014) provides numerous approaches to this type of group visioning exercise. Elements from methodologies such as the process planning session, user groups and task force were drawn from to facilitate discussion surrounding resident-led solutions to addressing community issues. As well, Green (2000) provided a comprehensive overview of the process of conducting a visioning workshop, including sample questions and different models of visioning. Of note was the Oregon model for
a visioning program that asked “Where are we now?”, “Where are we going?”, “Where do we want to be?”, and “How do we get there?”. This model was modified with the additional of the question “What are we doing well?” in order to recognize asset-based community development in the process. With regard to implementation, the group-visioning format asked these questions in order to discover the following:

Table 2-1: A table outlining the core questions asked at the visioning workshop with TAG members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where are we and what are we doing well?</td>
<td>Identify individual assets; prioritize what challenges are existing, and barriers to neighbourhood improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do we want to go?</td>
<td>Identify solutions to the prioritized challenges and barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do we get there?</td>
<td>Identify what type of support or supplies are needed to implement identified solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher intended for this visioning workshop to generate interest amongst participants to consider championing a storefront development for the community. The visioning workshop could enable participants to identify foundational resources and strategize such an opportunity (Kindon, 2010).

**Key Informant Interviews**

Four individual interviews were conducted with service providers within Rideau Heights to identify how challenges in the neighbourhood were being addressed, how collaboration was structured amongst the organizations, and what community-driven
development took place in the neighbourhood. Interviews were semi-structured (Dunn, 2010) and involved representatives from Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation, Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns, Kingston Community Health Centres, and KFL&A United Way. Interviews helped to gather the perspectives of various roles in the community, both formal and informal. It was important for the researcher to gather opinions on the existing services connecting in the area and to consider how service providers were involving residents of the neighbourhood in their organizations’ governance structures.

**Limitations & Bias**

This research utilizes a single case study to draw conclusions for a successful community development initiative. In that regard, using one case to draw conclusions is generally believed to have limitations in the generalizability and validity of the research. However, Baxter (2010) argues that in qualitative research, recognizing the difference between abstract and concrete concepts within a single case study will assist in the transferability of the case to other contexts. Baxter also argues that to achieve analytical generalizability, the case must be carefully selected and data drawn from the case cannot be too abstract or too case-specific. The ESS was chosen as a case study for this research because of its innovative success for community development that has been replicated in other cities. Furthermore, this case has relevant literature more readily available than other storefront initiatives in a similar context. It was important during this process to recognize the factors in the ESS case that are context specific to the neighbourhood or are too abstract to implement in Rideau Heights to ensure that the research is concrete and feasible.

On the one hand, it was important for the researcher to be aware of potential personal biases, including personal values and beliefs that also influence how this
research may be studied. As a former intern with the City of Kingston Housing Department, the researcher was involved in community engagement with residents of Rideau Heights. This position allowed the advantage for the researcher to have a standing rapport with established community members and agencies as an outsider to the neighbourhood, which was especially important in shaping the processes and abilities of the study (Dowling, 2010). Ongoing volunteer work with the Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation (KFHC) had allowed the researcher to have a more developed relationship with the staff and members of TAG. Such a relationship was also advantageous to allow more candid conversations and genuine perspectives on the community. Analysis may be more detailed with regard to KFHC and TAG, but this produced additional value and further insight to the research overall.

On the other hand, personal biases from this position had the potential to have a large influence on the research. Throughout the process, practicing critical reflexivity was important to ensure that the role as a public employee did not affect the role as a researcher in a way that compromised the research and thus, the results (Dowling, 2010). Reflexivity “is a process of constant self conscious scrutiny of the self as a researcher and the research process” (Dowling, 2010, p. 31); this was especially important when considering the potential power relations between the researcher and participants of the community visioning workshop.
3.0 Background

Demographics

Table 3-1: Census data outlining comparative statistics of Rideau Heights with the rest of the City of Kingston (Melles & Cleary, 2010, p.13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Low income Households before tax 2005 (City ranking/40)</th>
<th>Without high school diploma (City ranking/40)</th>
<th>Average Family Income</th>
<th>No. of Lone Parent Families</th>
<th>In labour force</th>
<th>Home Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner Harbour</td>
<td>7390</td>
<td>34.7% (37)</td>
<td>19.9% (37)</td>
<td>$56,520</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingscourt</td>
<td>4155</td>
<td>16.7% (29)</td>
<td>22.2% (39)</td>
<td>$56,786</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariner’s Acres</td>
<td>2735</td>
<td>12.7% (27)</td>
<td>19.5% (38)</td>
<td>$60,046</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rideau Heights</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td>46.1% (39)</td>
<td>32.0% (40)</td>
<td>$39,022</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamsville</td>
<td>2478</td>
<td>41.4% (38)</td>
<td>14.7% (35)</td>
<td>$53,751</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Kingston (all 5 neighbourhoods)</td>
<td>22,358</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>$53,227</td>
<td>1495</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Kingston</td>
<td>117,207</td>
<td>15.40%</td>
<td>10.70%</td>
<td>$68,396</td>
<td>5360</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By the numbers, Rideau Heights is a neighbourhood that experiences challenges across the spectrum. Table 3-1 shows select census data from 2006 outlining a number of factors that indicate the livelihood of families in the neighbourhood as compared with the rest of Kingston. Situated in Northern Kingston along the Cataraqui River (Figure 3-1), Rideau Heights is a geographically broad neighbourhood as defined by census data (Figure 3-2). However, the name Rideau Heights is mostly associated with a smaller subset of the area (Figure 3-3). For the purposes of this research, the geographic scope will be limited to this unofficially defined area comprised primarily of social housing and affordable rental units.
Figure 3-1: Map depicting Rideau Heights in relation to the City of Kingston. The Rideau Heights neighbourhood as defined by census data is approximately shown in red, while the subset area that is the focus of this report is shown in grey, labelled “Study Area” (Google Maps, 2015).
Figure 3-1: Map showing the delineation of Rideau Heights neighbourhood as part of the census data (City of Kingston, 2014, p.1).
Figure 3.3: A map showing the unofficially defined subset of Rideau Heights, which this research will focus on. The recent commercial development is shown in red to the west of the study area. This map also contextualizes the neighbourhood, showing its physical isolation from the rest of the city by railway tracks to the south (City of Kingston Housing Department, 2012, p.5).
This subset area of the Rideau Heights neighbourhood experiences the majority of challenges, such as high incidents of crime and vandalism. Most of the stigma attached to the name “Rideau Heights” is attributed to this area (City of Kingston Housing Department, 2012).

Table 3-2: A table showing data related to income, education, employment, and housing tenure in Rideau Heights as compared with the rest of the City of Kingston (Meagher, 2007; City of Kingston, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rideau Heights</th>
<th>City Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Family Income</td>
<td>$33,585</td>
<td>$39,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% With no High School Diploma or Certificate</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% With Post-Secondary Diploma</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Force Participation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeownership</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Income

In both 2001 and 2005, the average income in Rideau Heights was less than half of the city’s average income, showing the ongoing disparity experienced by residents (Table 3-2) (Meagher, 2007; City of Kingston, 2014). The number of families in Rideau Heights that are living on less than $10,000 annually is three times more than in any other Kingston neighbourhood. As a result, 23.3% of households in Rideau Heights rely on government benefits to sustain their livelihoods and the neighbourhood is often identified as being ‘trapped’ in economic challenges (Meagher, 2007).
Education

The level of education amongst residents compounds the difficulties experienced with income. In 2005, 32% of residents did not have a high school diploma or certificate while only 26% held a post-secondary degree from a college or university (Table 3-2) (City of Kingston, 2014).

Employment

Rideau Heights experiences some of the lowest labour force participation rates in the city in addition to higher than average unemployment rates (Table 3-2). By definition, those that do not participate in the labour force are those who are neither employed nor unemployed. These include students, people not looking for work, or who cannot work because of a long-term illness or disability. Unemployment rate refers to the portion of the population that is without paid work but is available for work, including those actively seeking employment or temporarily laid-off (City of Kingston, 2014).

Housing tenure

Housing tenure in Rideau Heights is significant, especially considering the concentration of social housing stock and affordable rental units available. Homeownership rates in this neighbourhood are only half of that in the average Kingston neighbourhood (Table 3-2) (City of Kingston, 2014). With a majority of Rideau Heights residents renting, many live within public and affordable units that are often declining in housing condition (Meagher, 2007). Over half of Kingston’s social housing stock is within north Kingston, indicating the geographic concentration of rent-gereared-to-income units. In addition to this, the demands and wait times for public housing is growing, with an approximate wait time of 6-24 months for families, 2+ years for seniors, and 4+ years for individuals (Melles & Cleary, 2010). Given the nature of social housing and possibly due to the stigma attached to the neighbourhood, Rideau
Heights experiences a high turnover rate, with almost 25% of households moving every year (Meagher, 2007).

**Age distribution**

The age distribution within Rideau Heights in 2005 and 2010 can be seen in Figures 3-4 and 3-5. From these figures, it is apparent that there are high proportions of children and youth under the age of 20 (City of Kingston, 2014). Over 15% of the population in Rideau Heights is under the age of 10, which is 50% higher than the city average (Meagher, 2007). Lone parent families make up 31% of families in Rideau Heights (Meagher, 2007), with 90% of lone parent families being lead by females (City of Kingston, 2014).
Figure 2-4: Population distribution by gender of Rideau Heights (City of Kingston, 2014, p.2).

Figure 3-5: Population distribution by gender of Rideau Heights (City of Kingston, 2014, p.2)
Identified needs + challenges

Both the community needs assessment (Melles & Cleary, 2010) and the community engagement strategy (Meagher, 2007) include findings from a number of interviews which identify prominent challenges in the neighbourhood. The following section discusses each of the dominant issues.

Income + Housing

The primary concerns identified by residents of Rideau Heights were low incomes and lack of adequate housing. Low incomes cause tenants to worry about their ability to pay monthly rents. Given that the Rideau Heights public housing stock is aging, close to 20% of residents rank their housing quality as poor. With deteriorating housing conditions, finding housing in Rideau Heights that is both adequate and affordable for families experiencing low income is a significant challenge. When asked where residents would like to see changes in their neighbourhood, the following three concerns were most prominent: low incomes, housing condition, and housing affordability (Melles & Cleary, 2010).

Safety

Interviews with residents identified perceptions of safety by community members, based on the level of criminal activity present in the neighbourhood. Although Rideau Heights is notorious for illegal drug activity, residents describe crime as pockets that exist throughout the neighbourhood, confined to a group of individuals. Conversations regarding crime indicated that most residents feel removed from criminal activity and believe that most Rideau Heights residents live honest lives (Melles & Cleary, 2010; Meagher, 2007).
Access to services

With the recent development of a commercial hub west of Rideau Heights, access to basic services, such as groceries, has greatly improved (Figure 3-3). Aside from this, residents identified difficulties in accessing affordable recreation for youth and childcare, with child welfare being one of the top priorities residents would like addressed. Additional support services such as dental care, public housing, Ontario Works, and employment supports were identified as some of the most difficult to access geographically (Meagher, 2007; Melles & Cleary, 2010).

Stigma

Almost half of Rideau Heights residents rank their neighbourhood reputation as poor, indicating the awareness that residents have of the negative stigma. People attribute this to the criminal activity, low incomes, and general upkeep in the neighbourhood that is perpetuated by the media. Residents’ reaction to the stigma is split: some people feel the reputation is undeserved, while others feel that individuals in the neighbourhood embrace the reputation and “act like” it (Melles & Cleary, 2010; Meagher, 2007).

Community connections

Of significance to this research are the divisions amongst social groups within Rideau Heights. Social networks are largely confined by income (homeowners vs. public housing renters), ethnicity (inward looking ethnic communities), and age (Worthington Park, an inward looking retirement community). Furthermore, a detachment between residents and their community is apparent, with almost 50% indicating no involvement with the community (Melles & Cleary, 2010; Meagher, 2007).
Earning trust + addressing needs

The sense of isolation in Rideau Heights from the rest of the city is enhanced by the distrust for institutions and service agencies. With a history of being ignored and numerous discussions of initiatives that have not materialized, residents have lost confidence in many institutions. Public schools along with a handful of organizations that have shown a commitment to the neighbourhood have earned the trust of residents. With initiatives such as the opening of the splash pad and the upcoming community center, community members are beginning to see tangible results that are rebuilding their confidence in available supports (Meagher, 2007; Melles & Cleary, 2010).

Interviews from the community needs assessment (Melles & Cleary, 2010) and the community engagement strategy (Meagher, 2007) indicated a variety of barriers that residents struggle with in accessing existing services. Accessibility issues stem from a lack of affordability and flexibility of programming. People prefer programs that do not require steady attendance or designed for a rigid category. Furthermore, merely being knowledgeable of what services are available is one of the most prominent barriers to accessing services, noting a lack of effective outreach and advertisement of programs. It is important to note that the flow of information and major communication in this neighbourhood is very unique. By far the most effective avenue of communication is through word of mouth, given the tight-knit connections present amongst residents. Perusing the neighbourhood and engaging in conversation with residents encountered upon proves to be the most successful engagement strategy, showing the informal nature of communication in Rideau Heights (Meagher, 2007).
**Strengths + Assets**

Given the challenges, Rideau Heights also contains numerous assets as a community. One of the greatest strengths identified by residents in the needs assessment (Melles & Cleary, 2010) includes the quantity of services available, indicating a reinvestment by the City and community to support its residents. Services in recent years have become more accessible geographically for Rideau Heights residents, as organizations have begun to open in the north end. As a result, more cooperation between agencies has taken place and the neighbourhood is receiving much needed attention.

The second strength identified by community members includes the strong social networks that interconnect residents and act as support networks for many individuals. The presence of positive relationships highlights the potential for residents to contribute and become involved with their communities. In this sense, the tight knit social networks create a sense of belonging, often focused around family ties and relationships between neighbourhood youth. As a result, there is a generational presence of families that stay in the neighbourhood and at times a distrustful, exclusive nature regarding outsiders (City of Kingston Housing Department, 2012; Meagher, 2007; Melles & Cleary, 2010)

**Background policy**

Broad policies have been outlined within the City of Kingston Parks and Recreation Master Plan (City of Kingston, 2010) and Sustainable Kingston Plan (Sustainable Kingston, 2010) that serve as directives for community development in the City of Kingston. The following section outlines some of the policies that support the collective, asset based, and resident driven approaches to community development that is highlighted in this research.
Asset-based community development

The City of Kingston’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan (City of Kingston, 2010) prioritizes asset-based community development (ABCD) as the preferred approach in improving community involvement and resident livelihoods. The plan recognizes the advantages of asset mapping and community engagement in mobilizing residents to address community challenges.

Under the social equity pillar of the Sustainable Kingston Plan, policies indicate the need to provide accessible and available programming as a means to community development. It encourages the development of youth potential through fostering individual assets for contribution to their communities (Sustainable Kingston, 2010).

Collective action

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan indicates the desire to prioritize community assets and identify areas for collaboration in addressing community issues (City of Kingston, 2010). Sustainable Kingston builds upon this policy by highlighting the importance of meaningful dialogue with community members regarding issues affecting community well-being (Sustainable Kingston, 2010).

Resident-led development

Having activities that directly reflect the desires of residents as well as creating space for resident governance are amongst the multiple objectives of Kingston’s community development policies (City of Kingston, 2010). Both policy plans highlight the importance of encouraging resident empowerment and developing the capacity for

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1 Asset-based community development (ABCD) is a strengths-based approach that focuses on the existing assets of a community and encourages citizens to take ownership of their own development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). See Chapter 4 for further discussion.
community members to take initiative in community development (Sustainable Kingston, 2010) (City of Kingston, 2010).

**Rideau Heights Regeneration**

The Rideau Heights Regeneration project is a long-term plan being implemented by the City of Kingston and Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation (KFHC) to revitalize the Rideau Heights neighbourhood. Officially proposed in 2013, the plan is meant to upgrade aging housing stock, introduce a social mix, and implement effective land-use planning principles to the neighbourhood. The objective is to engage in a comprehensive community planning process with a number of key stakeholders to develop a plan for neighbourhood renewal. The plan will focus on the core area outlined in Figure 3-3 that is comprised of a high concentration of public housing. With the reinvestment of infrastructure and public amenities into the neighbourhood, it is anticipated that many of the socioeconomic challenges historically characteristic of Rideau Heights can begin to see changes (City of Kingston Housing Department, 2012).
Figure 3.7: A map showing the existing configuration of public housing units in Rideau Heights (City of Kingston, 2015).
Current conditions

Currently, the core area of the neighbourhood consists primarily of aging row houses and low-rise apartments built around green spaces and parking lots. This configuration results in many units that lack street frontage (Figure 3-7). As a whole, there is a large amount of common space between two public parks and a network of internal pathways. Of the approximately 2,000 social housing units managed by KFHC, a quarter of them are concentrated within this area. By contrast, the area is surrounded by well-maintained, single and semi-detached family homes. The core area itself is physically disconnected from the rest of the city by railway tracks, with just two crossings along major arterials (Figure 3-3) (City of Kingston Housing Department, 2012).

The plan

Community engagement is extensive and ongoing as the plan unfolds in phases. Various engagement strategies have been utilized to date, including community open houses, use of community animators, door-to-door consultations, and community events. Connecting with a number of key service agencies is also being prioritized to identify opportunities for collaboration and ensure objectives are aligned (City of Kingston Housing Department, 2012).

The first phase of the plan is currently underway and includes a reconfiguration of Shannon Park to introduce more street frontage, market units, a new community center, and the decommissioning of an aging housing block. The revitalization plan for the park can be seen in greater detail in Figure 3-8, showcasing a new through street and proposed community center. A recreation hub is built up around the existing public school (City of Kingston, 2015).
Figure 3-8: A detailed map of the Shannon Park redevelopment (City of Kingston, 2015, p.445)

New private townhouses responding to the desire to create a mixed, sustainable community and provide improved security with more eyes on the parklands

New Community Centre providing improved recreational and community facilities and gathering spaces

New internal street to support pedestrian and cycling connections and improved access to the park and community facilities

New public street drawing people into the park and improving visibility and security

Decommissioned public housing to provide better visibility and feelings of security within the park
Figure 3-9: The Rideau Heights Regeneration long-term draft plan for the overall neighbourhood (City of Kingston, 2015, p. 463)
The long term plan for Rideau Heights will include an improved built form with better connectivity and densities overall (Figure 3-9). Introducing a mix of housing tenures will also bring diversity to the neighbourhood and help to distribute public housing more evenly throughout the city (City of Kingston Housing Department, 2012).

**Identifying the benefits of establishing a community hub/storefront**

“Community development is about finding people who are concerned about the community and providing them with support, skills development and opportunities to work with their neighbours toward successful outcomes” (Meagher, 2007, p.22)

In the findings from the community engagement report (Meagher, 2007), the potential for a storefront initiative in addressing community challenges was identified based on existing community assets and the newly available space within the proposed community center. As the heart of the new recreational hub, this community center is ideal for a community storefront due to its geographic accessibility and the presence of amenities (such as the public school and skate park) that would draw in community members. Much like the East Scarborough Storefront (see Chapter 5), the community center may dedicate a space for service agencies to coordinate efforts and for community members to gather (Meagher, 2007).

From the interviews with residents in the engagement strategy (Meagher, 2007), a list of potential programs and supports was compiled to showcase what residents desire to see at the new community center (Figure 3-10). Utilizing this input and
supporting more resident governance on program delivery (e.g. scheduling) can lead to the success of a storefront initiative in Rideau Heights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adopt-a-senior</th>
<th>Drug awareness programs</th>
<th>Line dancing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and crafts</td>
<td>Early years facility</td>
<td>Literacy programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>Ethnic festival events</td>
<td>Movie night</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Exercise Groups</td>
<td>Outdoor washrooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better Beginnings Programs</td>
<td>Floor hockey</td>
<td>Parent/child drop in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big events/community meetings</td>
<td>Food bank</td>
<td>Prenatal programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMX facility</td>
<td>Foosball</td>
<td>Programs and services year round</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boys and Girls Club programs</td>
<td>Free skate</td>
<td>for all age groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Card night</td>
<td>Games room</td>
<td>Repertoire theatre productions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Checkers</td>
<td>Good food box</td>
<td>Respite care*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chess</td>
<td>Government offices for easy access</td>
<td>Rollerblading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>Gym facility / weight room</td>
<td>Rugby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children's programs</td>
<td>Health access and referral</td>
<td>Seniors programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas event</td>
<td>High school equivalency programs</td>
<td>Skateboard park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clothing bank</td>
<td>High volume events (family reunions, weddings, corporate meetings, seniors events)</td>
<td>Sledge hockey</td>
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<td>Clubs for teens</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
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<td>Community Health Centre programs</td>
<td>Homework clubs</td>
<td>Social activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community kitchen</td>
<td>Ice time/free skate*</td>
<td>Social club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>Intergenerational programs</td>
<td>Space for parties and celebrations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooking classes</td>
<td>Keep parking facilities</td>
<td>Special events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>Knitting</td>
<td>Sports camps</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Events</td>
<td>Large multi-purpose room with on-site storage</td>
<td>Swimming pool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curling</td>
<td>Leagues</td>
<td>Teen drop in</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dances</td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day camp</td>
<td>Youth drop-in/counselling centre</td>
<td>Women's broomball league</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dinner programs</td>
<td>Youth programs</td>
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</tbody>
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Asset-based Development

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to development that focuses on internal and existing strengths of the community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Rather than a model for practice, it can be considered a method, or perspective as opposed to a traditional “needs-based” approach. ABCD focuses on two components: internal strengths of the community, and external influences on development (Ennis & West, 2010).

Why it’s important – the development of client-provider relationships

The external influences on ABCD are significant when considering the traditional needs-based approach to development. In this method, communities develop with a reliance on external institutions and support (Ennis & West, 2010; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). ABCD challenges this approach that can leave communities dependent on institutional support, stigmatized by wider society, and sometimes geographically, socially and economically isolated. When a community becomes saturated with services from external institutions or agencies, community members begin to act as consumers or clients of various programs rather than as citizens of their own community (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). While these services tend to provide much needed ongoing support, they may fail to extend beyond this to more reciprocal, problem-solving relationships that build the existing capacity and resiliency of residents. The nature of the dependency resulting from client-provider relationships begins to define the identities of community members. These identities are generated both by the community itself, as well as by the external public (Kretzmann & McKnight,
As community members begin to identify in this manner, they lose the incentive and empowerment to become producers of their own development. Furthermore, as community members increasingly focus on external support, associations and groups within the community are no longer prioritized and connections within the community are diminished (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). This further agitates the isolation and stigmatization of a single community that constantly seeks support from external institutions.

An ABCD approach that prioritizes assets within a community to drive development relies on the genuine care of residents for each other and the community. It develops a commitment from the heart to improving the livelihoods within the community. Rather than external services that operate under a structured system, ABCD allows development to be flexible, informal, and directly respond to resident needs, thus building resiliency for the future. When a community contains enough community members that care about the livelihoods within the community, this can manifest into a shared vision for the community that can ultimately drive their own development (McKnight & Block, 2010).

**Identifying assets**

Assets within a community often go unrecognized and unappreciated. However, a community holds an abundance of assets once they are identified. Consideration for individual skill sets and gifts of community members, along with the capacity of local associations, public institutions, and private enterprises indicate the abundance of assets that people alone can contribute to community development. Additionally, communities hold physical assets as part of their neighbourhood structure, which can act as potential resources in enabling initiatives (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).
Two key assets within the community are essential in facilitating and enabling such transformative development. The first is identifying community leaders, who recognize the capacity of the community and understand the value of ABCD. The second involves the relationships amongst individuals and associations relating to the level of meaningful collaboration (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Every community member belongs to a network of individuals, whether social, kinship or associated networks, which contribute to the potential for mobilizing community assets (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Creating and nurturing community connections allows the manifestation of individual assets into community actions and initiatives.

One of the first steps in ABCD is asset mapping. This involves creating an inventory of the numerous individual, institutional, and physical assets that exist within the community. This step is practical, in that it results in a tactical list of potential assets that may be referenced for mobilizing community development. Additionally, the act of identifying assets itself is invaluable to a community; this shifts the focus of the community from one that may have historically dwelled on the deficits and needs, to one that is rich in potential and resources (Ennis & West, 2010). It helps to redefine how the community sees itself, as a starting point on how external parties view the community.

Identifying assets can be extremely complicated and subjective. Some organizations or services may exist within the community that are quickly distinguished as assets, but their mere existence is not always indicative of their responsiveness to community needs (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Advantages of focusing on assets
Re-focusing a community on its existing assets can alter the dynamic between community members and create a more cohesive vision. Communities are often times
divided by differing values and opinions, creating challenges in collaborating towards common goals. When dialogue is re-focused around existing assets, it encourages people to find common ground and identify similar values that can motivate meaningful collaboration. Rather than isolate pockets of differing value systems, community members come together with more foundational connections (McKnight & Block, 2010).

When emphasis is put on positive assets of the community, individuals become proud and empowered to become involved. In a setting where community members identify with the assets of the community, there is greater possibility of challenging the power inequalities that create the reliance and helplessness in the client-provider relationship. With existing assets, residents may approach community development in partnership with external institutions on a more equal basis (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003).

**Connecting assets**

Following the undertaking of identifying assets is recognizing where connections need to take place. Asset mapping is an essential element of ABCD, but merely listing out resources does not outline the adequacy and accessibility for residents of the neighbourhood. Ennis & West (2010) outline the importance of network mapping, to understand the structural constraints and recognize opportunities that exist amongst assets of the community.

Making connections between individual assets and assets available in the community can mobilize the potential for initiatives that work towards meeting community needs (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Utilizing and expanding connections promotes active citizenship and participation of more residents as part of their community. All types of relationships have the potential to be invaluable, whether
social, economic, formal, or informal, and can connect individuals with sources of power to build upon their assets (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Understanding the external linkages of the community provides insight on macro-level factors that influence the community, such as the existing political or economic environment. Connecting community level initiatives to the broader political context can influence policies that encourage such initiatives in the future, building capacity for the community to persevere in further endeavours. Such a connection could transform the position of a community that is often in a position of need to an empowered community that is seeking support for it’s own initiatives (Ennis & West, 2010).

Strengthening community connections: Building Trust

Network mapping, or identifying community connections involve recognizing where and how formal or informal communication largely takes place. Opportunities to strengthen or expand upon these channels of communication should be considered to grow the social networks of residents. Enhancing communication within a community can more effectively reach individuals and groups that are not a part of the mainstream activity of the neighbourhood but have equally valuable contributions. Formalizing some forms of communication can help to validate dialogue into meaningful action (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

One of the most important aspects of trying to build up community networks is the element of trust. Trust allows individuals and groups to divulge genuine needs and capabilities to contribute to each other. It ensures that the complexities of real-life challenges are considered and that solutions are tailored to the issue (McKnight & Block, 2010). As mentioned in Chapter 3, trust has historically been a challenge to build within Rideau Heights, especially between institutions and residents. Though it
takes time and perseverance, gaining trust can be a powerful tool in truly understanding what kind support is necessary to address some key issues in the community.

Limitations of ABCD

ABCD faces a number of contextual limitations as well. As an approach to community development, it does not address the regulatory and policy environment within which a community may be participating in ABCD. Social linkages, specifically with external institutions to release the potential of community assets, would require an environment that is conducive to building such relationships (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Mathie & Cunningham, 2005). For example, regulations surrounding micro-lending policies would affect how some institutions may be able to support community members who are seeking loans for small business ventures. Additionally, ABCD does not confront the power relations that may exist amongst community members. Power or status differentials may prevent some community members from participating in leadership positions or ABCD overall due to a lack of confidence, or oppression from those with power (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). If ABCD holds the intention for an equal process that considers the assets contributed by groups in a community that are often overlooked, the power relations within these groups should also be confronted (Mathie & Cunningham, 2005).
**Collective approach**

The focus on connections and relationships is a vital part of community development, especially with regard to resident-led approaches. Social relations amongst community members are one of the most powerful components of social capital within a community (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Collective Impact, an approach introduced by Kania & Kramer (2011) outlines a structure behind how collaboration amongst local services agencies and institutions, may be organized in a way that is powerful and effective at addressing complex social problems. Collective Impact is a systemic approach that utilizes a structured management system to leverage relationships between organizations towards shared objectives. Through collaboration amongst services, opportunities to integrate data tracking, combine resources, reduce duplications, and connect with more clients are infinitely greater (Roberts & O’Connor, 2007).

Collaboration amongst services is advantageous, but building connections beyond services to other key influential bodies is important as well. Creating partnerships with public institutions, private corporations, and community members enhances the potential for each player to meet common objectives (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Creating these connections under a similar structure as the Collective Impact approach can enable opportunities to respond to community needs more efficiently. Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) outline a number of examples, such as creating informal marketplaces as a result of community members collaborating with private companies, or creating housing cooperatives in collaboration with public institutions. Whether collaboration between or amongst service providers, community members, public and private institutions, it is clear that making connections is a vital part of successful community development.
Why it is important

Recognizing the value to a collective approach as part of community development requires examining the shortcomings of working in isolation. In the current not-for-profit sector, different services and programs compete for grants to continue operations. Competition of funding causes organizations to try to isolate their impacts in creating a necessary niche in the community for their services. This perception can lead to organizations inventing different solutions to solving similar issues, sometimes working at odds and exhausting more resources. Working in silos relies on the hope that a single organization may be the solution to community issues. However, complex social issues are never an isolated problem. They are often symptoms of a larger challenge with a continuum of influential factors. Therefore, an isolated approach that fixates on one point along this continuum cannot have a large impact unless all aspects are also being addressed at the same time (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

A cross-sector collaborative approach has a number of advantages in addressing complex social issues (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Mathie & Cunningham (2003) differentiate between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital, a concept that is built off of the work of Putnam (2000). Bonding social capital involves the close relationships that people utilize during stressful times, such as those with friends and family. Bridging social capital connects people beyond these close, personal relationships, allowing a transformative level of support that social bonds may not offer. A collective approach would help to increase the amount of bridging social capital while also support the bonding of social capital.

In addition to collective action for bringing more effective service delivery, a collaborated effort can increase the number of connections within the community, thus increasing the awareness and outreach to more clients that would benefit from
available services (Roberts & O'Connor, 2007). Having a more effective system as a result of collaboration can alleviate challenges upstream as opposed to facing a series of problems as a result of complex social issues downstream (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012).

Important elements of building a collective action network

Kania and Kramer (2011) outline a number of important elements to a Collective Impact. Having a centralized infrastructure in place with dedicated staff helps to legitimize a collective action and have accountability towards an established entity. This allows community members and support services to focus on their goals while other administrative tasks can be accomplished by dedicated staff. Within the centralized infrastructure, there should be a formal structure to the collective actions of involved stakeholders, ensuring that all players are working towards a common agenda. The common agenda generally involves shared measurements of objectives, where actions of all involved agencies and community members are evaluated against the same criteria. Streamlining goals prevents overlaps and conflicts between organizations, and helps to reinforce efforts that already exist in the community. Having a dedicated system for Collective Impact requires extensive communication to be embedded into the structure and should include external supports such as relevant government bodies (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012). As collaboration works to address overlapping and duplicate services through continuous communication, all participants of the Collective Impact should facilitate mutually reinforcing activities that work to support individual objectives as part of the common agenda (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

Funders

As a connection point between many service agencies that are often working towards similar community objectives, funders can be a catalyst to collective action networks. They can create opportunities where organizations may meet on a similar
platform to build relationships. Such opportunities work to build recognition of efforts within the community as well as garner mutual respect between organizations (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Torjman & Makhoul, 2012).

A shift in the role of funders and how they foresee community development may be necessary in sustaining an effective collective action. In addition to funding individual organizations and community efforts, funders can facilitate collaboration and provide shared measurements for common agendas. The tangible benefits of collaboration require an extensive process that may not be realized in the short-term. The nature of funding would need to support this prolonged undertaking, accepting that benefits may not be immediately apparent (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

Community connectors and leaders

Apart from agencies, individual community members need also to have a significant role in developing a collaborative process. Making connections within the community, especially among residents that are not necessarily actively involved with the neighbourhood, is a difficult task. McKnight & Block (2010) outline the necessity of community ‘connectors’ that work informally as well as formally in reaching out to community members. These connectors are established, trusted community members that believe in their community, enjoy socializing and see the potential in every individual. With these amplified networks, more individuals within the community can become connected with each other, as well as relevant organizations. Stronger networks can engage individual capacities, or utilize individual assets in a combined effort towards community development.
**Resident-led development**

A part of good, fundamental community development is to avoid presumptions of what a neighbourhood needs to address its challenges. Community development is a dynamic process that needs to constantly explore different approaches and adapt to the ever-changing needs of its residents (Leviten-Reid, 2006). With continually evolving conditions of a neighbourhood, it is difficult to expect service agencies to adapt in real-time. Residents of a neighbourhood are the most in tune about what challenges and opportunities they face, therefore, resident-led community development is a key factor to successfully addressing comprehensive community issues. This seeks a shift in the role of governments and service agencies as stand alone bodies meant to address isolated issues and moves towards the integration of community members in collaborating towards complex solutions (Torjman & Makhoul, 2012).

Torjman & Makhoul (2012) identify principles of community-led development that highlight the importance of existing assets, the Collective Impact approach, and the need for local leadership and empowerment of the community. These principles emphasize the structure by which resident-led development can take place. Community driven initiatives based on assets within the community require both government and policy support to sustain the development as part of the broader civic environment (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003).

Resident-led development is critical to sustainable healthy development in addressing community needs. It builds upon local, and often times informal, knowledge that is critical in addressing dynamic and comprehensive needs. It allows for individual citizens to build upon their own networks and encourages the development of local leaders. A collective, strong voice developed from genuine community organizing will help to garner the attention of high-level governments for social transformation (Leviten-Reid, 2006).
What needs to happen?

The process of community-driven development is embedded in its unique governance. As stated by Torjman & Makhoul (2012), there is a shift from ‘government’ to ‘governance’, whereas the process is not restricted to the political process that may be interrupted by electoral terms and budget reforms. This allows the development of longer-term visions and scoping that is required for social transformation. It is important to ensure that the process allows sufficient time for residents to organize and prioritize objectives, allowing well-informed decision-making (Levitien-Reid, 2006). Initiatives should be formed by ideas from residents, or proposals that are supported by a significant number of residents (Levitien-Reid, 2006).

Evaluation of community driven initiatives can be difficult, but necessary to sustain a resident-driven governance structure and practice. Leviten-Reid (2006) suggests three main components for an evaluative process. The first is to ensure that governments and service agencies engage in a collaborative relationship with residents, sharing responsibilities in reaching common objectives. Second, that there is adequate succession planning to sustain the initiative through stages of leadership and governance. Allowing a versatility of responsibilities for those involved keeps knowledgeable personnel and sustains the process. The last component is to ensure that supporting organizations have visions and objectives similar to those of the initiative, or as part of the overarching direction that residents discern.

Resident-led development requires an individual or group that has the capacity to motivate, lead the initiative, and bring diverse members of the community together. The role of leadership in such an initiative requires a number of considerations. In addition to holding a certain level of trust amongst community members, it is vital that the leadership is grounded in mutual respect between leaders and community
members. It is ideal to have a leadership style that is informal in nature rather than the conventional authoritarian type. This fosters trust and the ability to realize individual assets that may contribute to community progress (Ennis & West, 2010).

Of course, residents cannot address community challenges alone. In working with government and community agencies, collaboration should work to ensure governance by residents and support by agencies. Careful attention to the language of communication between players and ensuring that there is enough time structured into the process for effective decision-making is important. Utilizing media to give voice to the members of the community in mobilizing change can help support the momentum of initiatives and bring a positive light to the public about what is happening. Having public attention to initiatives gives credibility and the confidence to residents that they are making a difference (Leviten-Reid, 2006).

Changes to how community development is currently done will be necessary to adopt elements of resident governance. Funding structures determine many of the initiatives and programs present in a community. Focusing funding on outcomes that the community wants to see rather than aligning with agency objectives can help to shift the focus away from service delivery and more towards meeting community goals. Having arenas for more participatory governance in matters beyond community development can encourage a culture of citizenship and accountability to political decisions made in the broader community (Leviten-Reid, 2006).

**Lessons learned**

Leviten-Reid (2006) offers a substantive list of lessons learned from common challenges amongst resident-led initiatives.
• Allow adequate time for the process. A resident empowered approach requires extensive time to build a strong, trusting foundation. Meaningful and comprehensive engagement with community members takes substantial time but is necessary to build connections, create awareness of the initiative, and essentially recruit potentially interested members of the community. Empowerment of residents to take ownership of development may be slow due to uncertainties of how to proceed. Furthermore, having divergent perspectives as part of an organic and unstructured process will inevitably face turbulence, and patience will be required to allow residents to take lead in addressing community challenges.

• Keep expectations in check. Knowing that the process for resident-led initiatives takes a substantial amount of time, it is important to not only keep expectations from the community realistic, but to also ensure that partnering agencies, funders and even those observing the process through media have realistic expectations. Without this, progress of the initiative may be quashed if external supports are cut off or if residents become discouraged. In response to this, it is worthwhile to pursue little wins initially and be able to show tangible results early on in the process to validate both internally as well as externally, that the process works and is an invaluable part of the community.

• Recognize the diversity. In a community that is made up of a diverse demographic, a resident-led approach should be representative of the many groups that are influenced. Inclusion of youth and seniors, as well as different ethnic backgrounds is important in responding to a spectrum of needs and building cohesion amongst community members. In particular within the Rideau Heights
context is the need to consider residents in different housing situations, notably those in public housing and private rentals/ownership.

Diversity of perspectives will also be encountered amongst external supports, such as between service agencies and political institutions. It is important to directly address the potential divergence of priorities amongst key stakeholders and work to find a common ground to operate within (Leviten-Reid, 2006). At times, it will require the need to accept divergent perspectives and allow some partnerships to fall through (Mann, 2010).

- **Involve local residents at all stages of development.** As a resident-led approach, it is imperative to involve community members in all aspects and stages of the initiative. At the research and engagement level, residents will have established knowledge and their own connections that will prove to be invaluable to the process. Allowing residents to building bridges with service agencies ensures that these connections are established and pathways for communication run directly from the ground level to support services. In this way, community members are able to build capacity and awareness from exposure to different groups. Additionally, some organizations and service agencies are able to build their own capacity in reconnecting at the ground level.

- **Recognize the value of informal connections.** Much of community development takes place in the professional realm where processes are structured and connections are formal. In a resident-led approach, community members own informal connections through personal networks are a highly valuable asset that
should be formally recognized as part of the process. Personal connections within the neighbourhood can be a valuable part of engagement and creating awareness. Furthermore, there will be many community members that are uncomfortable or intimidated with more formal events, such as open houses or formal meetings. Utilizing informal pathways to connect with neighbours stays true to the nature of the resident-led approach and connects with community members that may not otherwise become involved.
5.0 Case Study

History

East Scarborough is a neighbourhood within the Greater Toronto Area with a number of comparable characteristics to Rideau Heights. With one of the highest concentrations of social housing in Ontario and one-third of the population considered low-income, many of challenges found in Rideau Heights regarding unemployment, transit, and housing were seen in East Scarborough (Mann, 2010). At the same time, services in the area were not effectively meeting the need of community members (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010). The East Scarborough Storefront (ESS) came at a critical point in need when a large number of refugee and recently homeless families and individuals were housed in a nearby motel with little direction to the appropriate support services (Roche & Roberts, 2007). A group of individuals from service agencies, planners, and residents collaborated to address the growing need in the community. The initiative began as a basic door-knocking campaign to help identify individual community member needs. What grew from this initiative was the recognition that services working together could respond to resident identified challenges. Collectively, agencies could create a mutually reinforcing framework to work together and provide a continuum of care in addressing complex social issues (Mann, 2010) (Roche & Roberts, 2007).

The initial stages of forming the ESS occurred at an opportune time. With more attention from municipal decision-makers, the inequity present in the suburban communities of Scarborough became a priority, leading underserviced neighbourhoods to be identified as a focus for investment (Cowen & Parlette, 2011). It took a couple of years for ESS to build sincere trust with community agencies and
residents, but eventually the ESS saw thousands of residents monthly, who were seeking support for everything from employment to recreation services. During this progress, the ESS faced a threat of closure due to a cut in funding. What came out of this was a gathering of solidarity amongst community members who protested and ensured that the ESS initiative remained strong in their neighbourhood. This demonstration brought the community together and validated how much the residents valued the ESS and its role in the community (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010) (Roche & Roberts, 2007).

**What is it?**

The East Scarborough Storefront (ESS) is a physical space, literally a storefront, within the neighbourhood that is accessible for all members of the community regardless of age, culture, and abilities. The space is shared between the backbone administrative individuals of the ESS along with over 40 social service agencies coming in at scheduled times (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010). A multiservice delivery hub, providing a spectrum of services at one stop provides the flexibility for clients with limited accessibility and tight schedules (Cowen & Parlette, 2011). This model also serves agencies well in that coordination amongst service delivery may produce more effective programming and provide a more comprehensive response to client needs (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010).

Beyond this, the ESS is unique based on its governance structure and commitment to community ownership. Decision-making boards for the ESS include 50% representation by community members and 50% representation by service agencies (Roche & Roberts, 2007). This allows the empowerment of the community residents in leading the direction of service delivery and ultimately, their own community development in partnership with key service providers. A collaborative relationship like this not only required extensive trust building with community members, but also a
trusting relationship with services in order to make these commitments (Roche & Roberts, 2007).

**Functions of the ESS**

The ESS identifies three main functions of the storefront: to facilitate collaboration, build community and support people (Mann, 2010). The first involves creating bridges amongst community members and services. The ESS recognizes opportunities in connecting the community with local post-secondary institutions and creating mutually beneficial opportunities with students. Facilitating collaboration also involves deconstructing the process of services that function in silos. Services that operate and communicate differently require a common platform to begin collaboration (Mann, 2010). It is a difficult balance in bringing stakeholders together to ensure that each agency’s identity, independence, and dignity in the community are recognized; the ESS continuously works to address this issue in developing a committed and sustainable relationship with all of its service partners. For example, not charging rent for agencies to be present at the ESS allows a genuine partnership to form over a traditional property owner/renter relationship. No one agency, including the ESS, leads, but rather all agencies collaborate to reach a common goal (Mann, 2010). Ultimately, the ESS encourages services to operate as part of the bigger picture (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010) (Roche & Roberts, 2007).

Community ownership and resident empowerment are at the core of building community through an initiative like the ESS. With equal voice in decision-making powers, residents build their leadership capacity and take charge of their own development process (Cowen & Parlette, 2011). Embedded in the structure of the ESS is the directive for residents to decide what programs and services are available at the storefront, ultimately identifying their own wants over traditional, prescribed needs (Roche & Roberts, 2007). Furthermore, the ESS holds open community forums in
connecting with the wider community and listening to concerns. Information from these sessions are used by decision-making bodies to guide further development in response to community concerns (Roche & Roberts, 2007).

The ESS’s commitment to marginalized and low-income populations of east Scarborough emphasizes their last function of supporting people. Providing a hub of services free of charge fundamentally responds to the direct needs of the community. Building and sustaining good relationships with services outside the neighbourhood is also critical to connect residents with needs that may not directly be provided by the storefront.

**Formal structure**

The storefront connects with two key networks that work towards the functioning of the initiative (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010). The first is a grassroots community development team that connects with residents to learn about, and participate in the ESS. This resident-led team helps to direct the ESS towards common objectives that are steered by community voices. The second network is the Neighbourhood Action Partnership, which is an overarching City of Toronto initiative; this partnership is run by the Community Development Unit with similar partnerships in 13 other priority neighbourhoods in the Greater Toronto Area (City of Toronto, 2015). The Neighbourhood Action Partnership facilitates collaboration amongst city departments and key organizations within the city to provide vulnerable residents with integrated services to address issues such as employment, youth justice, and family supports. Together, these networks help to support the functions of the ESS and continue to connect the community at the grassroots level to available resources as well as the rest of the city (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010).

At the base level, the ESS strives to provide two ongoing streams of support for residents: employment supports and business initiative supports. Additional services
are provided based on input from residents. Employment supports include having in-house specialists that work with individuals to outline career or job objectives and help to connect with opportunities to develop their skills. These specialists also assist with job searches and job preparedness as part of the community employment resource centre located within the ESS. Business initiative support helps entrepreneurs in the neighbourhood to establish successful small business ventures. This helps to build the capacity and skills of individuals to carry out small, isolated business ventures. Support includes a range of advice on financial management, legal assistance, micro-lending, business planning, marketing, and administration. Initial support for new entrepreneurs also involves connecting with potential community resources, such as formal programs/larger businesses for advice, and students/retirees for human capital (The East Scarborough Storefront, 2010).

**Governance Structure**

With power-sharing at the core of decision-making at the ESS, an organized governance framework is established to maintain efficient management of the storefront. The ESS has a unique position as the heart of a collaborative partnership. It requires deconstruction of the power dynamics that often exist within hierarchical organizations (Roche & Roberts, 2007). With service agencies and community members having an equal voice on the matters of the storefront, it ensures committed relationships and transparency of the process. The diagram shown in Figure 5-1 depicts the process by which an identified policy becomes approved. It shows that a policy or guideline may be brought forth by a combination of community members, service agencies, or ESS staff and presented to the steering committee (Roche & Roberts, 2007). The steering committee comprises 7 service agency representatives and 7 appointed community members with specific responsibilities (outlined in Appendix D & E of (Mann, 2010)). This body ultimately makes decisions on how new policies may be
East Scarborough Storefront Communication Flow Chart

Figure 5-1: Diagram depicting how new policies are developed at the ESS (Roche & Roberts, 2007).
implemented at the storefront and thus work towards the storefront objectives (Roche & Roberts, 2007). Unlike conventional hierarchical organizations, both the community and services share the power in decision-making and take ownership for the direction taken by the ESS (Roche & Roberts, 2007).

With a number of non-profit organizations working together in the same field of support in the same area, the ESS faced conflicts of territory and overlapping services. Service agencies may differ in ideological approaches and objectives. The ESS works to address these differences and confront conflicts of territory to arrange a collaboration that could benefit the agencies as well as the clients. Inevitably, this caused some partnerships to fall through; however, it was important to recognize and accept that not all services can align harmoniously and that it does not reduce the value of the collection of services to the community (Roche & Roberts, 2007).

A large part of the ESS philosophy is the emphasis on constant reflection and refining of the process. Staff are encouraged to critically examine the ongoing operations of ESS and evaluate whether they are meeting the core objective of serving the community. This demands a level of flexibility in the structure of operations to respond to changing needs and challenges identified through re-examination. The storefront holds multiple visioning sessions and meetings amongst staff throughout the year to identify areas to improve and ensure the initiative is headed in the right direction (Roche & Roberts, 2007).

**Financial model**

Financing of the ESS is a critical component to its success, however, this report does describe the detailed complexities involved with funding such an initiative, and will only outline the structure necessary to ensure the use of funding, if received. The storefront, like many not-for-profit organizations, receives limited resources for
required administration and financial management. In the beginning, the storefront partnered with the Boys and Girls Club as a trustee to hold and manage the funds to run the operations. The details and language behind the terms of this agreement were carefully crafted to ensure that the partnership was one of financial means only. The ESS strived to retain its own individual identity as a separate and independent body to ensure ownership was under the guise of the community and not a service agency (Roche & Roberts, 2007) (Mann, 2010).

The ESS has also connected with Tides Canada Initiatives Society, a charitable organization that provides administrative and legal support for not-for-profit organizations as part of their mission to enable social change (Tides Canada, n.d.). This partnership allows the ESS to focus on community development and program delivery without using limited resources to manage the storefront (Mann, 2010). Tides Canada also connects donors and grant-makers directly to charitable organizations that meet their missions and ultimately enables programs to focus on their mandates. With a number of initiatives and organizations with similar objectives working with Tides Canada, resources and ideas can be exchanged freely to further increase the efficiency of each organization’s operations (Tides Canada, n.d.).

**Examples of initiatives**

As an established part of the community, the ESS has enabled more opportunities for community individuals and groups to become engaged and take on local initiatives. In addition to ongoing employment and business initiative supports for new entrepreneurs, the ESS also takes on a number of different approaches to enable community development. Recruiting volunteers from the community to assist with events and programs can help grassroots initiatives with human capital, hone the skills of the volunteers, and make new connections in the community, contributing to the overall social capital of the neighbourhood. This also relates to community/university
partnerships created by the ESS to utilize opportunities for students, faculty and community members to work towards community development initiatives in a manner that is mutually beneficial (Mann, 2010).

For smaller proposals brought forth by community members, the ESS holds a Neighbourhood Trust to provide funding and organizational support for neighbourhood programs. These include activities such as sports leagues, cooking clubs, choirs, etc. Traditionally, many of the programs that offered these activities were formalized under a professional organization. With the Neighbourhood Trust, community members were able to adopt from these programs and ultimately take ownership in moulding the culture and pride of community owned recreation (Mann, 2010).

One of the most successful projects of the ESS was the Community Design Initiative that involved an intensive design charette comprised of neighbourhood youth, architects, planners, and urban designers to finalize the facility for the storefront’s expansion. It allowed the community to directly make decisions on what the facility should include and how it should be designed to enable their visions of the storefront operations. As a result, the ESS was equipped with community kitchens to allow food preparation programming and was retrofitted with sustainable building features (e.g. eco-friendly water & heating systems) (Mann, 2010).

**Applicable lessons**

Mann (2010) outlines a number of lessons for the success of the ESS to date. In the context of a potentially similar initiative in Rideau Heights, these lessons are summarized below.

- **Have patience.** Establishing a resident-led initiative takes substantial time to build trust, connect with the community, and develop a structure to form
commitments with all the key agencies. This process will take time to learn how to effectively engage with the variety of organizations and community members of Rideau Heights. Ultimately, deciding on a collective vision for the neighbourhood and accepting which entities to involve and which do not fit into the mandate will take a necessary amount of time to get it right.

- Address the inherent power differentials between agencies and residents, and commit to power-sharing. An initiative like the ESS requires the acknowledgement of the power differentials that exist between service agencies and community members/clients. A commitment to form decision-making structures that involve community members and ensure that leadership is dispersed throughout the structure is an important step to empowering residents and confirming community ownership. Although it is emphasized at the decision-making level to include community voices, resident input and leadership should be incorporated at all levels of operations.

It is also crucial to address power differentials that may exist between service agencies to ensure that one organization does not dominate over other, potentially smaller organizations.

- Always refer back to the objective: This is for the people, by the people. When faced with challenges or decisions that may change the direction of the initiative, it is important to remember the fundamental mission of an initiative like the storefront. The ESS asks itself three fundamental questions: “What information has the community provided to help guide this decision?”, “How will the decision impact the community?”, and “Will this take us closer to the vision?”. 
Additionally, a Rideau Heights initiative may ask, “Do community residents maintain their leadership roles and ownership?”. Through the evolution of an initiative like the ESS, different opportunities can lead the initiative astray. If these fundamental questions are consistently asked, the initiative can stay undiluted by dynamic forces.

- **Establish a sound governance and administrative structure.** Having an organized administrative structure in place prevents uncertainties of overlapping responsibilities and encourages a transparent process. However for a Rideau Heights initiative to develop, it is important that the administration and governance structure reflects the values of the initiative. This structure should come from the collective voice of partnered service agencies as well as community members to ensure joint ownership of the process. Developing such a structure takes a substantial amount of time, but is necessary to establish a consistent and accountable operation.

- **Always reflect and constantly learn.** A storefront initiative is context-specific and will always face dynamic changes in the physical and social environment. Like the ESS, a Rideau Heights initiative should involve systematically scheduled events that bring together key stakeholders to critically self-examine the operations of the initiative and what can be improved. Building on the input from these events, the initiative should be flexible enough to implement these changes and learn from them upon future endeavours.
6.0 Findings + Analysis

This chapter will outline the findings from the visioning workshop with residents as well as from the key informant interviews conducted with four key service agencies and organizations working in North Kingston, specifically Rideau Heights. These organizations included the Kingston Community Health Center (KCHC) Community Development Team, the United Way KFL&A (the United Way), Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC), and the Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation. The findings are organized into the following themes:

- Identified community challenges and barriers to neighbourhood improvement,
- Identified community and individual assets,
- Organizing collaboration and engagement within the neighbourhood, and
- The capacity and existence of community-driven initiatives and resident governance.

Neighbourhood challenges & barriers to improvement

Workshop

Workshop participants were separated into 4 of groups at 4 tables. A number of challenges were identified by several of the groups as priorities, or as most significant in the community. Among these priorities were the prevalence of crime, vandalism, and drugs that were identified as being perpetuated by a lack of security in the area. The lack of rule enforcement has lead to disorder with regard to designated parking spaces, dirt bikes and off-road vehicles being driven through housing complexes and green spaces, with excessive noise during evening hours. Garbage presence around the neighbourhood is an ongoing issue due to the lack of an established recycling
system as well as a general negligence by some community members to properly dispose of garbage.

Of significance to this research was the identification of the lack of community involvement and the negative stigma associated with the perception of Kingston’s north end, specifically Rideau Heights. Workshop participants identified the lack of outreach to residents that were not as involved with the community and the importance of including generally unconnected residents to community initiatives and available programs. Specifically, participants spoke of the need to involve and connect with the prevalent youth population in the neighbourhood.

**Interviews**

**The cyclic nature of challenges.** The most prominent issue identified in interviews was the cyclic nature of the challenges that face the neighbourhood and the inability to find sustainable solutions to address root issues, both on an individual as well as a community level. On an individual and generational level, residents continue to face cycles of challenges that are characteristic of the area, whether within their own lifetime or between generations to follow. These cycles can be a product of a number of factors, including a lack of economic opportunities, level of resiliency related to life skills and budgeting, fear of leaving comfort zones, and educational attainment. Possibly due to the recurring nature of challenges that residents face, hopelessness and loss of faith were also identified as major barriers to breaking the cycle. Losing faith can stem from the lack of seeing positive results come out of different arenas in life, specifically when there is a lack of follow-through on different initiatives and tangible benefits. On a community level, challenges continue to be present in the neighbourhood by nature of the public housing system. As residents build up their social and economic resilience, they move out of public housing, hence out of the neighbourhood, and are replaced with individuals that may experience a high level of
need. Therefore, the community as a whole sees an ongoing cycle of challenges in the neighbourhood because of the concentration and nature of public housing.

**Stigma.** Another dominant challenge that was recognized in the interviews included the negative stigma associated with Rideau Heights. The stigma held by professionals and agencies was identified to cause an effect on the service approach of many organizations. As a result, agencies often make assumptions about what is best for their clients and fail to participate in meaningful resident engagement that could better inform their service delivery. The language associated with the name “Rideau Heights” is negative through both media as well as word-of-mouth, even though the neighbourhood itself has seen great improvements in the last 20 years.²,³

**Services.** Although the neighbourhood has seen the greatest improvement to availability and accessibility of services, there is still considerable room for improvement. Some programs may set high expectations for clients to meet as part of their program mandates, rather than responding to individuals at their own levels. Jumping immediately to solutions is difficult to avoid in the social service sector, but changing the structure of service delivery may alleviate this issue. Additionally, some key services are found to still be geographically inaccessible for some residents, including Ontario Works, the food bank, and adult education programs to name a few.²,³

**Lack of community involvement.** In alignment with the findings from the workshop, community involvement was identified as a challenge preventing community development. Many residents relied on agencies to guide progress in the neighbourhood and serve to represent the issues that they faced on a day-to-day basis. Depending on the type of involvement, such as a neighbourhood watch, fear of
retaliation from other community members was recognized as a major barrier for residents to become engaged. Furthermore, community members may not feel like there is a place to get involved and may become intimidated by the unfamiliarity of the process and structure of getting involved. Lastly, residents who face limited incomes may simply not have time within their schedules to be involved in their community iv.

Community & individual assets

Workshop

A full list of self-identified individual assets from the visioning workshop is presented in Appendix A. Of note are the various skills and hobbies that participants identified that have the potential to build community relationships, even on a small scale. These activities include fishing, scrapbooking and photography. Other assets that were identified include skills that could be utilized to help other residents, such as dog training, health care training (including personal support worker certification), and a number of caregiving and childcare capabilities (including certification for childcare). Significant to some of the challenges recognized in the community are the number of individual assets that identified the ability to bring community members together, such as organizing community sports, organizing community dinners/BBQs, and volunteering. It is apparent through this workshop that with just a small sample size of neighbourhood residents, the number of assets held by individuals in the community hold the potential for asset-based community development.

Interviews

Services. The establishment of many supportive services and programs within the north end of Kingston has immensely improved the geographic accessibility for residents in the area. Having the Kingston Community Health Centre located in the heart of the neighbourhood with numerous programs that are involved in a variety of
ways with the neighbourhood has given them credibility and a level of trust amongst community members\(^1\). One of the primary reasons given to KFHC by families who choose to stay in the neighbourhood is the programming provided at local schools that involve and connect with youth. Overall, the vast array of programming to residents can be seen as a valuable asset to this community\(^3\).

**Youth.** It is important to recognize the potential for the youth population as an asset, given the substantial representation of youth in the neighbourhood demographic. “Jr. CRNC”, an elementary school based program involving youth in developing community events and initiatives, was identified as a prime example of youth engagement. Involvement at a young age can encourage ongoing engagement with the community as youth become adults in the neighbourhood. This in turn, can be the catalyst in breaking the cyclic nature of challenges present on an individual and community level\(^2\).

**Investment from the City.** With the Rideau Heights Regeneration plan, many assets will be realized within the neighbourhood (City of Kingston Housing Department, 2012). Introducing market housing\(^2\) incorporated into the concentration of public housing units is seen as an opportunity for social mix, preserving an established community without high turnover and eventually an overall growth in the neighbourhood. With new amenities such as the community centre and revitalized Shannon Park, there are hopes that citizens outside of North Kingston will be drawn to the neighbourhood and that people that left the neighbourhood will choose to return\(^1\). Other projects such as the 3rd Crossing, are seen as opportunities for more exposure

\(^{i}\) Market Housing is defined as housing that is supplied by the private market without direct government subsidies (Capital Region Board, 2015)
and connectivity to the rest of the city, which can help to address the negative associations with Rideau Heights⁴.

**Relationships + Connections.** Social cohesion within the neighbourhood is strong amongst neighbours, giving a high level of trust that is formed from these informal and personal connections. These relationships are especially valuable for families to allow children the freedom to venture throughout the neighbourhood, knowing that other parents will contribute in ensuring the safety of the kids¹⁴. Having these connections can also help to support and encourage more community involvement.
Organizing collaboration and engagement within the neighbourhood

Workshop

Connections between residents. Through discussion within the workshop on implementation strategies, two types of connections were mentioned. The first was how community members connected with each other regarding community initiatives and events. In general, these connections were done informally through personal connections in the neighbourhood and most prevalently determined by proximities of households. Neighbourhood cohesion was predominant within housing complexes, termed “pods” by residents. Townhouses in the neighbourhood are configured into inward looking blocks, where residents are most familiar with those within their blocks (see Chapter 3, Figure 3-7). Other connections include those of family ties as well as through children attending the same school.

Connections between residents and agencies. The second type of connection is between residents of the neighbourhood with the service agencies and programs available to the community. Some discussion within the workshop identified the lack of outreach and awareness of existing programs for individuals, specifically youth. Identified communication to residents regarding community services, programs, and events included door-to-door flyers and information through the school system.

Interviews

Inter-agency collaboration. Overall, there was consensus that service agencies in North Kingston are well connected and well aware of the roles that each organization fills in the community\(^1,2,4\). Depending on the cause, different agencies may organize a coalition between relevant agencies to come together in discussing and addressing particular issues (e.g. the Dental Coalition)\(^4\). Although this type of
collaboration is a significant need that is filled in the community, it rarely goes beyond communication into developing tactical and sustained initiatives. 

**Connections between agencies and residents.** According to the interview respondents, connections among the agencies are superb; however, it was recognized that improvements can be made for agencies in terms of connecting with residents. Some agencies claimed that community events and schools are main tools of engagement with community members; however, this was also identified as problematic in that many priorities are not being recognized by services, compounding the tendency for agencies to act as though they “know what is best”. Most significantly, recent trends in service provision have seen a withdrawal of many program workers from “crossing the threshold” – that is, being tuned in with clients’ home and personal lives. A prime example of this type of connection is the issue of garbage around the neighbourhood, an issue that is heightened by a number of home-related as well as personal factors (e.g. hoarding). Even with the saturation of programming available to address a wide range of issues, the root of many challenges are still being ignored.

As workers within a property management corporation first and foremost, the staff at KFHC have developed a unique relationship with their tenants at Rideau Heights. Given the majority of interactions involve paying rent, it is natural that conversations lead into personal and sometimes emotional issues. KFHC staff, since locating a satellite office in the heart of the neighbourhood, has strived to develop a trusting relationship with their tenants that is built on mutual respect and dismantling of obvious power differentials. Tenants are comfortable and relationships are casual enough that office hours at the satellite office were developed to accommodate families dropping in, sometimes to discuss neighbourhood issues, but for the most part
just to chat. Trust is developed enough that residents can be taken to the Landlord-Tenant Board for eviction, and still get a ride home from KFHC staff because they know it is not personal. It is clear that KFHC staff have the unique opportunity to “cross the threshold”, and have taken this advantage to build invaluable relationships and play a vital role in the community³.

**Capacity and existence of resident governance and community-driven initiatives**

**Workshop**

**Neighbourhood Watch.** Workshop participants thoroughly discussed a number of initiatives that may be implemented by residents in addressing community issues. Most significant was the potential for organized community policing, or a neighbourhood watch program to combat some of the safety issues existing in the neighbourhood. This was a contentious topic, specifically considering the violence and drug activity too dangerous and ambitious to take on at a community level. However, it was established that a neighbourhood watch program would not be implemented to “take down the drug lords”, but rather to come together as a united front to combat activity such as petty theft or vandalism to community and private property.

**Youth.** Concern for child and youth welfare was one of the prioritized challenges that lead residents to suggest community organized recreational programming, both in an informal as well as in a formal context. Identifying a lack of adult role models in the neighbourhood, residents felt it was important that recreation be lead by community residents. Having a resident be present in the neighbourhood outside of the structure of a recreation program provides better accessibility of adult role models to youth in the neighbourhood. A neighbourhood environment fosters youth to develop both an informal as well as formal relationship with good role models and thus, more likely to
develop more significant and valuable mentorship bonds. One participant within the workshop regularly organizes informal neighbourhood sports and sees many youth in the neighbourhood participating. Residents identified this as a valuable asset to the community and indicated that having more adults distributed in the neighbourhood to organize informal sports would help improve child and youth welfare in the long term.

Of note are some considerations for any community-driven initiative going forward in Rideau Heights. The importance of involving youth with any governance structure or potential programming was emphasized to ensure that youth have the opportunity to become connected to the community and take ownership of their neighbourhood. In addition to youth, participants also emphasized the need to connect with residents outside of public housing that are also within the Rideau Heights neighbourhood. A strong divide between public housing residents and private renters/owners exist in the neighbourhood, and should be addressed through any community-driven initiative.

**Reaching out.** Workshop participants also touched upon the need to publicize the successes that may result from resident-led initiatives. The purpose would be two-fold: first to address negative stigmas and perceptions of the neighbourhood from the rest of the city, and second to build awareness within the community to garner interest and momentum for further initiatives. Reaching out at the political level to call attention to the development happening at the community level was considered a priority by some workshop participants, to gain recognition from municipal decision-makers on the potential for community-driven initiatives.

**Interviews**

Resident-driven involvement and empowerment were seen as vital to any community development going forward in Rideau Heights. KFHC takes on many initiatives that are beyond the fundamental mandates of a property management
corporation, many of which may be lead by residents themselves\(^3\). As one service provider pointed out, service workers are not residents of the community, they leave at 4:30pm and return to their own communities. To achieve authentic development, residents need to take initiatives upon themselves\(^1\).

**Successful examples.** A part of KCHC’s mandate includes resident advocacy and flexibility to allow for more leadership by residents. A number of programs available through KCHC have a resident governance component, specifically the special events committee, the Good Food Box, and Better Beginnings\(^3\). Each of these programs lead by KCHC have a Terms of Reference document that outlines the decision-making powers of residents involved\(^1,2\).

Physical structures, like the children’s splash pad (used in the summer months) and upcoming skate park, developed from funds raised by community members, are great examples of neighbourhood initiatives with a resident-driven component\(^2\). Historically, a few instances of successful community organizing have also occurred to advocate for access to a better livelihood. The ‘Save the Wally’ campaign in the 1990s brought together the community to prevent the demolition of the neighbourhood Wally Elmer Community Centre and indoor arena. This campaign required residents to prepare and sign petitions, show up at meetings, and to make presentations to City Hall. It mobilized the better part of the community and motivated pride among the residents.

\(^{iii}\) The KCHC special events committee “plans and implements affordable community events for families and individuals involved with KCHC” (Kingston Community Health Centres, 2015)

The Good Food Box “allows anyone to purchase an assorted basket of fruits and vegetables for less than the cost at the grocery store” (Kingston Community Health Centres, 2015)

“Better Beginnings for Kingston Children (BBKC) offers programs and supports for families with children from 0-5 years living in north Kingston.” They operate with an advisory group consisting of community members, agencies, and community advisors. (Kingston Community Health Centres, 2015)
In this instance, local media was used to an advantage in advocating in favour of the initiative. More recently, residents gathered to campaign for better transit service and accessibility. Community members simply organized a meeting with a Kingston Transit representative to make the representatives aware of the challenges of taking public transit in a geographically isolated neighbourhood like Rideau Heights. This input was considered when developing the new express routes in Kingston, and a simple solution of providing transit pass purchases at a nearby store responded to the need for more accessible passes.

What do we need? For many initiatives to get started, funding may be required for resources or supplies. This could potentially come from a number of different sources, including various grants or a re-structuring of some agencies to alter their investment approaches. More importantly, a system of coordination is important in organizing any resident initiative, to ensure follow through and results. As indicated by the identified hopelessness and frustration of residents, making certain that outcomes are visible should be a priority. Therefore, it is strategic to begin with initiatives that are easy and simple to start and finish. From this, the necessary confidence and momentum can be gained to continue onto larger initiatives. This sequence will also allow the ability to refine a structured process and organized system in the early stages. As one agency noted, starting small is also important as to not intimidate residents at the onset, especially if some are at a lower confidence level to begin with.

What could it look like? Agencies recognize the potential for resident-driven development, identifying the numerous assets, skills sets and strong connections that are present. With more interaction and skills sharing between community members, the potential for meaningful development is enormous.
Although there is also great potential for partnerships with groups such as the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG), there is a limit as to how much KFHC will have in resources to lead a group like the TAG further. Ideally, TAG members could develop into leaders within their own complexes to bring about initiatives driven and lead by tenants themselves. A scenario such as this one would require initiative by individual residents, not something imposed by KFHC staff. At this level, residents should be strong enough to approach services and political institutions to advocate for change they want to see and make room for their own input within the decision-making system.

A resident-driven initiative could begin as simple as an advisory group or committee that is made up of a diversity of community members including but not limited to public housing tenants, private renters/homeowners, youth, and seniors. This group could be the representative liaisons for the community, working to advise agencies and political institutions on what residents in the community would like to see. If the advisory group expresses a need for a service that already exists, it would identify a lack of outreach and communication. If the need is not met in the community, this would be an opportunity for services or political institutions to work with residents in addressing the need. A general consensus from interviews determined that agencies recognize the value of grassroots development and resident empowerment, and it is likely that such an advisory group would be well received by services in the area.

Interview respondents identified a number of different opportunities that could materialize in the community for resident-driven development. The first is the new community centre that is being constructed as part of the Rideau Heights Regeneration plan that has intentions for community space for programming. The second is the potential within the Regeneration plan for a community space to develop at the base of a proposed public housing apartment building that is also a part of the new
construction. This space would serve as the KFHC satellite office, a laundro-mat as well as a casual third space for residents to meet and connect\(^3\). In both scenarios, these public spaces could be utilized as a designated space for resident-driven community development work.

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1 Personal communication, March 6, 2015
2 Personal communication, March 13, 2015
3 Personal communication, April 8, 2015a
4 Personal communication, April 8, 2015b
7.0 Recommendations and Conclusion

Throughout this research, three main themes were carried out at each stage: asset-based development, collective action, and resident-driven development. From the findings, the existing collaboration between agencies serves as a good starting point for Collective Impact to take place, but requires more structure and dedication from existing service agencies. Community development in Rideau Heights does not fully utilize the potential of existing assets, specifically the manpower and skill sets of individual community members. A storefront initiative may work to bring to light all of the potential that exists in Rideau Heights for asset-based development, collective action, and resident-driven development.

Considerations for creating a storefront

Start small and have patience. A recurring recommendation from this research for any community-driven development, specifically at the onset, is the need to both select simple initiatives and recognize that the process may take longer than expected. Being realistic about results include celebrating small strides as the large wins that they are. Interviews and workshop discussions outlined the need to focus on one initiative at a time, as it is easy to get distracted by a number of operations happening at once. Focusing energy and motivation on a single initiative can better ensure that there is follow through and tangible results that may be showcased and advertised. As a result, confidence would be built amongst involved residents, other community members would be knowledgeable about the initiative should they want to
become involved, and perceptions of the neighbourhood would be improved given the success of the initiative.

**Link assets to addressing neighbourhood concerns whenever possible.** Both individuals as well as the community as a whole are evidently saturated with assets and skills. Looking first to existing assets prevents the ongoing reliance on external services or new programming. This is especially important when considering small, resident-driven initiatives that do not have the resources to seek out external supplies and manpower. Looking within the community can enhance the community ownership of the initiative and require fewer resources to operate.

**Now is the time to act!** With the Rideau Heights Regeneration plan underway, now is the optimal time for any community-driven initiatives to occur. Changes to the neighbourhood can create space for resident initiatives as part of the new structure. The time between planning and implementation can be utilized to the advantage of residents looking to create more resources catered to their needs, such as a storefront space, accommodation for recreation and open space, a need for more natural surveillance, and public amenities including garbage bins, benches, lighting, etc. Additionally, introducing private and market households into the neighbourhood can ensure a more stable and established population, allowing resident initiatives to be sustained into the future. This may also allow KFHC tenants the ability to stay in the neighbourhood even if they move out of public housing (KCHC).

Along with the Regeneration, which is a state-of-the-art, multi-million dollar plan, comes the attention on Rideau Heights from city council and relevant departments, service agencies, and the rest of Kingston citizens. The neighbourhood for the first time in many years has the attention of key players recognizing the value of resident input.
and are interested to support community development. Stakeholders invested into the neighbourhood plan will be looking for successful social developments to take place as a result of the Regeneration. Media and advertisement of community-driven development will be easiest at this time and creates a prime opportunity to both advocate for external support and finally create positive associations with the neighbourhood.

**Suggestions on how a storefront may look like**

**Physical locations**

The new community centre being developed adjacent to the Rideau Heights Public School provides a great opportunity to develop a community-driven storefront. With the additional recreation within and surrounding the community centre, these activities could serve as an anchor to draw community members to the space. More residents being exposed to the storefront leads to more residents becoming aware, involved, and ultimately utilizing the storefront for their own needs. Whether it has a physically designated space or not, development of the community centre space should be primarily determined through an established advisory group comprised of residents.

Alternatively, a storefront initiative may also be successfully established as part of the proposed re-establishment of the KFHC satellite office, Laundromat, and common space at the base of a public housing apartment building in the Regeneration plans (Figure 7-1). Given the uniquely casual and trusting relationship that the KFHC staff have with their tenants, having the office as an anchor would also be effective.
Figure 7.1: A map showing the draft plan for the Rideau Heights Regeneration project. The suggestion for a storefront initiative as part of a re-established KFHC satellite office could be at the base of the proposed KFHC apartment buildings, indicated by Block 4a and Block 5a (City of Kingston, 2015, p.463)
With tenants dropping in to chat informally, or discuss neighbourhood issues already, KFHC would be a valuable asset in drawing in community members to the space. The presence of a Laundromat would further bring in residents from the surrounding area that may stay to wait for their laundry to finish.

Both scenarios are ideal in that they are centralized to the neighbourhood and have great anchor amenities that would draw in community members. Although the anchors would be vital to establishing a storefront initiative, it is equally important to indicate the identity of the storefront separate from either the City, or from KFHC. Community members must be able to identify the storefront as an independent, resident-led initiative that does not answer to a higher institution. Given that both of these locations are to be developed in the future, this provides an advantageous amount of time to develop and establish a resident-led initiative to justify the need for a physical space for future growth.

Structure

A dedicated facilitator role is vital. Having a paid facilitator present is essential as resident-driven development begins to evolve. Much of the issues surrounding the feasibility of initiating programs like a recreation league or neighbourhood watch during the workshop came down to a matter of structure and responsibility. Uncertainties about available physical and financial resources could be guided by a dedicated facilitator to seek out what is needed. The facilitator would ensure initiatives are working towards improving the neighbourhood and coordinate initiatives to allow community members to focus on running the operations.

Additionally, a dedicated facilitator would operate similarly to the backbone organization that is characteristic of a Collective Impact, to organize collective action between agencies that are working towards a larger, common goal. Being
knowledgeable of all initiatives occurring in Rideau Heights lends the opportunity to connect resident initiatives with relevant agencies and programs. It is likely that without a facilitator, the momentum of starting an initiative could get caught up in administrative and logistical work.

**An advisory group.** With an advisory group, community members may begin to inform decisions that affect residents at the community as well as the political level. With enough recognition, services and public institutions will begin to seek out the advisory group to obtain genuine community input. As opposed to TAG, this group would include a diversity of Rideau Heights residents in addition to public housing tenants, and meet regularly to discuss community-wide issues. Residents, rather than an organization would run the group. Members would be responsible for spreading and collecting information amongst their neighbours and social circles within the community. There is great opportunity in establishing an advisory group during the Regeneration plan as the community undergoes major revitalization.

This advisory group would act in two ways. At all times they will represent the community desires and advise external agencies and institutions, but will also work to take on initiatives of their own, using community assets to respond to community needs and desires.

**A group with an established, physical storefront.** With the evolution of a successful advisory group, establishing a physical location would ensure the accessibility of resident-driven development to all residents of the neighbourhood. The storefront may act as a community gathering place, with a dedicated community facilitator in place to organize community input and orchestrate initiatives. The advisory group may begin to partner with community service agencies that can support various initiatives being run out of the storefront. The storefront may be the base where
Collective Impact, lead by residents and dedicated community facilitators, would take place towards a common goal, set by the community.

**Recommendations**

The following are a set of recommended actions that should be considered as a starting point for developing a storefront initiative in Rideau Heights. These actions are short-term as well as over-arching, and focus mostly on initiating and supporting a resident-driven organization. Recommendations are organized between actions for residents, and actions for agencies and public institutions.

**Residents**

1. **Don’t ask for permission, ask for support.**

   Community members can become accustomed to rely on programs and agencies to lead community initiatives. Taking charge of small community initiatives can be simple, informal, and natural. Rather than waiting for agencies to develop and approve a proposed initiative, residents should take the lead to organize and develop initiatives themselves, asking agencies for financial and resource support.

2. **Think bigger.**

   As recognized by some workshop participants, further initiatives need to begin to look beyond the support that may be provided by KFHC. As a group, TAG may begin to start growing beyond the limits of the tenants of public housing, and include diverse members of the community that live in private rentals or homes. As TAG is growing, it is an important step to recognize the limits of TAG and see the potential of using TAG as a stepping stone to creating a resident group that encompasses more than just concerns relating to tenants and public housing.
3. **Establish a structure.**

In developing an advisory group as part of a storefront initiative, it is vital to establish a governance structure to determine the nature of the group and how it will function. This process need not be overly complicated and may start out very simple, such as outlining the group’s objectives, established meeting times/location, and how decisions will be made with the group. Decision-making is important and may take the form of an appointed body of members that have the final say, or as a group-wide voting structure. A Terms of Reference should be drafted to ensure that these decisions are established and may be referred to during future processes of the group. Decisions on how residents can become involved with the group should also be established.

Forming a group with an established structure is first and foremost in the development of a community-driven storefront initiative. This creates a body that holds accountable the initiatives that are suggested by residents. Having an organized group behind an initiative can provide credibility to the process and create the necessary momentum and human capital support required to sustain a project to its successful implementation.

4. **Connect with other residents.**

Members of the established advisory group should have an obligation to reach out to neighbours and fellow community members. Creating informal connections as a member of an established group will further legitimize the cause, create awareness of initiatives, and expand the pool of social and human capital. It is important that any engagement or involvement include a diversity of residents, including youth, seniors, single parents and private renters/homeowners.
5. **Connect with more agencies.**

Residents alone may not have enough resources to carry forward many key initiatives. Creating collaborative partnerships and coalitions with service agencies is vital in receiving supportive resources as well as creating respectful relationships that garner the recognition of legitimacy as a community group.

**Agencies**

1. **Reconsider funding structures.**

Storefront initiatives are unconventional in nature and require a funding system that accommodates this. Initiatives may be one-off, or long term, with no tangible or measurable results other than improving the livelihoods of neighbourhood residents. With initiatives being informal and in some ways, unstructured, it would be difficult to secure traditional funding. If funding agencies and public institutions recognize the value behind informal community-driven initiatives, a separate stream of funding could be made available for such initiatives.

2. **Consider resident-ownership of programs.**

Agencies in Rideau Heights as well as the Rideau Heights Regeneration team should identify different opportunities where community residents may be able to provide some level of governance. Introducing residents into decision-making boards is a good first step. Some agencies have initiatives that may be adopted by residents in both implementation and governance (e.g. KFHC’s spring community clean-up).

With the Regeneration plan bringing in new community hubs such as the community centre and/or proposed community space, this is an opportunity for introducing resident governance and decision-making into the plans for the
neighbourhood. The City departments responsible for the Regeneration plan along with KFHC may decide what components of the plan they cannot compromise on (i.e. factors that are related to health & safety), and allow residents, or an established advisory group to make decisions on the rest, given a set of guidelines if preferred (United Way).

3. **Continue outreach and provide support, not enforcement.**

Agency engagement with residents could always be improved. With an established advisory group or storefront, it is the responsibility of all parties (residents, agencies, and the City) to keep communication ongoing. The role of agencies and public institutions is one of support in providing funding or resources, and not to overcome and absorb initiatives. Big picture decision-making should be in the hands of community members with advice and support from external bodies if necessary. This will require a level of trust in residents that may need to develop through relationship building over time. Eventually, building that bridge and providing the necessary supports will benefit overall outreach to a wider population for many agencies.

4. **Go beyond collaboration and work towards a Collective Impact**

Agencies in Rideau Heights are collaborating well. They are aware of the various programs available in the neighbourhood, there are a number of coalitions that focus on single initiatives, and monthly meetings are held by CRNC, where agencies discuss current operations of their programs. These processes are important to the efficiency of service delivery in Rideau Heights, however, a concerted Collective Impact effort can improve the effectiveness of programs as a whole for community members.
Through the storefront, a Collective Impact may be achieved. Services in the area should recognize the validity of such an initiative, and commit time and resources to becoming a partner. Some modifications to a program’s operations or evaluation process may be necessary to mutually reinforce the activities of all services in the Collective Impact. Therefore, flexibility to reach a common goal is important is an important element for agencies to consider.
Next Steps

A number of potential community development initiatives were identified through data collection. The following provides three examples of proposed initiatives, each broken down and simplified. Such resident-led undertakings provide a good first step into the right direction a storefront initiative. They include the following:

- **Informal recreation league for neighbourhood youth and adults.** This can range from hobbies like fishing, to organized sports like softball or street hockey. Because coordination and organization of such an initiative would be informal by nature, it is possible to work around resident’s schedules. Advertisements and outreach would generally be conducted through word of mouth and informal connections. By sustaining a casual, grassroots element to the initiative, it is possible to build informal mentorship and role models that are created and strengthened within the recreational activity, but extend beyond it, into the community.

  An initiative like this league could require minimal support, such as sports equipment, facility booking, transportation, or advertising support through flyers or website development. Any one of these could be sought through supportive agencies, but could also look to the City’s recreation department or Public Health KFL&A.

- **Clean up the community campaign.** A number of small initiatives can take place to promote a cleaner environment in Rideau Heights. Neighbours and families can simply organize a time to get together, and pick up the strewn garbage
in their own yards and connecting common areas. Some residents suffer from varying degrees of hoarding, which may stem into overall issues of community garbage (KFHC). Select residents who are willing to volunteer can come together to respond to a neighbours need in cleaning the inside of their homes. Lastly, community members can collaborate to paint and decorate community-owned garbage bins located amongst the common areas. This would provide garbage bins in areas of high litter, establish community ownership and identity through decoration/designs, and create an opportunity for a collective community event.

Supplies such as garbage bags, cleaning equipment, painting equipment and garbage bins could be sought out from KFHC, who also hold community clean-up days and have proposed decorated garbage bins as a potential solution to the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG). Alternatively, small initiatives like this could also seek funding from KCHC’s community development team.

**Neighbourhood watch program.** A Neighbourhood Watch initiative may seem precarious due to fear of retaliation from other community members, but can be distilled to very simple tasks and objectives. Starting with select TAG members, they may encourage other community members to join once positive results are realized. Through regularly scheduled meetings with interested community members, residents may meet to discuss ongoing or one-off suspicious activities they observe in their complexes. This allows community members to become more aware of overall criminal or illegal behaviours in the community, including off-road vehicles, noise complaints, illegal dumping, speeding, vandalism and petty theft. As a collective, this group can establish a relationship with the Kingston Police, and bring to them a collective report of prevalent incidents occurring in the
neighbourhood. A small initiative like this need not address large, dangerous activity like harassment, violence, and drug trafficking; however, there is value to a cohesive and devoted group should dangerous incidents materialize. Together, a neighbourhood watch group may individually report emergencies that occur to ensure that police arrive in a timely manner and realize that there is merit to their concern.

An initiative like this would again require very few, if any, supplies. Coordination and room/facility booking for meetings may be done without cost in KFHC common rooms. Posters that indicate an area is under neighbourhood watch is an option and could be done at little cost, especially with support from Kingston Police.

All in all, the community of Rideau Heights is now at a tipping point for more effective, community-driven development. The pieces are all in place to establish a storefront initiative: a neighbourhood redevelopment plan that may accommodate the space, a body of residents that are rich in assets and willingness to be involved, and the presence of trusted key service agencies that are well connected and eager to collaborate with each other as well as community members. A storefront initiative can take on a number of forms, but essentially should involve a governance structure that focuses on community members having decision-making powers and room for developing resident-driven solutions to community issues. Having a platform where existing service agencies may work towards true collective action would further strengthen effective development in partnership with resident guidance. Essentially, a storefront may bring together the immense potential that exists in Rideau Heights to move towards a well-connected, hospitable community that residents are proud to call home.
Appendix A: List of individual assets from the workshop with residents

Participants of the workshop were asked the following questions:

What are some things you are good at?

What can you teach?

What kind of skills do you have?

What do you love to do?

These were their answers, which outlined existing individual assets:

- Driving
- Fishing (3)
- Hunting
- CPR (2)
- Childcare certified
- Community sports, hockey
- Outdoor activities
- Dog Training
- CRAFTS – making junk into art
- Organizing community dinners
- Events – Cleanups, bingos, BBQs
- Volunteering
- Cooking + Baking
- Caregiver
- Swimming
- Conflict Resolution
- WHIMIS
- Smart Serve
- Cleaning (2)
- Scrapbooking (2)
- Photography (2)
- Gardening
- Organization
- Pet care
- Health care training
- Computer, TV, Biking, Walking
- Neighbourhood recycling
- PSW Certification
- Wood Working
- Parenting (Advise Around CAS)
- Music
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