



Voices of Toronto Speak Up:

A Shared Vision for the 2018 City of Toronto Budget



November 2017

CONSULTATION

Over the past 7 months, community members have gone out across the City to talk to their neighbours and fellow Torontonians about the future of our City. The consultations spoken about in this report were hosted by Commitment TO Community (C2C), a city-wide coalition of residents, faith communities, non-profit groups, and community organizations working together to support actions that reduce poverty and increase equity to make Toronto a better city to live in. This report conveys the views of the hundreds of residents who participated in community events and conversations in every corner of our City. We hope that sharing resident views will help Councillors set priorities that reflect community hopes for our City and draft a 2018 Budget that meets those goals.

Communities gave input through three main types of activities:

- (i) Information tables were set up at community events held across the city. At these tables, people came to write down the ways that they feel that Toronto can do better. Hundreds of people participated in these outreach event conversations and provided their suggestions verbally, in addition to 150 people who formally provided written documentation of their suggestions.
- (ii) A one-page survey was distributed to residents in Thorncliffe Park, Scarborough Southwest, and South Etobicoke to get their views on what kind of City they want. 267 residents participated in the survey to speak to what they valued about their communities and what changes they'd like to see;
- (iii) A day-long Town Hall event was held on November 12th, 2017. It was attended by almost 100 residents from across the City, who came together to discuss hopes and concerns, and participate in creating a shared vision for a better Toronto.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The message from the hundreds of residents that we spoke to is clear: many people are struggling. Residents from across the City share similar concerns. People value the communities they live in and care about their neighbourhoods; however, year after year they see cuts that strain their communities and the nickel and diming that make the things that support their communities more and more threadbare. And they are worried about the future.

They see growing problems with affordable housing, transit, employment, childcare, and the environment. People are not seeing on the ground improvements to their communities and in their lives.

People are counting on City Hall to address these issues, but they are not seeing things turn around. There is a need for Mayor and Council to restore our confidence and regain the trust of Toronto residents; to keep their promises by implementing the many strategies and action plans they have adopted which aim to reduce poverty and increase access to services and supports like housing, transit, and child care.

The residents of Toronto rely on City services and programs to make life better for themselves and for others around them. According to City staff, Mayor and Council needs to invest \$66M to fully implement the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy – and related strategies - in the 2018 City Budget. This is needed in order to merely keep up with the commitments City Hall has already made to improve access to affordable housing, reliable and affordable transit, affordable childcare, affordable recreation programs, and other key services.

Council unanimously adopted the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy, and also voted overwhelmingly to adopt action plans to improve access to transit, housing, childcare, recreation and other services. Communities are eager to see Council support neighbourhoods across Toronto by delivering on these promised actions by fully funding these City strategies in 2018.

We know from the City's TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy report, that poverty disproportionately affects Indigenous populations, people of colour, women, newcomers, and persons with disabilities. However, all residents of Toronto will benefit from the City fully funding their Poverty Reduction Strategy. Appendix I shows the City's report on the costs of Council approved strategies. The City determined that \$66M would need to be invested in order to fully fund these strategies however, Housing Opportunities Toronto, one of the key identified needs amongst residents of Toronto, was not included in this calculation. There is a strong will in the community to address the urgent need for affordable housing, amongst the other aforementioned services that the City promised to fund.

Feedback at Community Events

At community events residents were asked to write down their ideas about how they feel their communities or the City could be made better. Events included festivals, annual community meetings,

pedestrian days, film showings, and street fair (refer to Appendix II and Figure 1 for a list of community events residents participated in). C2C tables had a visual map of Toronto and residents were then asked to write their ideas down on Post-It notes and place these messages on the map to show ways on how to build a better Toronto.

Key themes provided by residents who formally documented their suggestions from these community events included:

1. Investing in more affordable housing

Residents across the city widely agreed on the need for more affordable housing in Toronto.

2. Increasing the number of homeless shelters in the City

Toronto residents said the City needs more homeless shelters. The high levels of poverty in the City were also discussed as a contributing factor for many people to not have adequate shelter. Residents hope the City will do more to help those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

3. Increasing childcare spaces

We're concerned about the lack of childcare spaces across the City, and hope that the City will invest in more childcare spaces so parents can return to work.

4. Lowering TTC costs

People across the City agree that TTC fares are too high. Many people reported that TTC fares need to be fair and subsidies for transit should be provided for those from low-income households, children, and seniors.

5. Increasing employment opportunities

People said it was hard to get decent jobs in Toronto. There is a need for the City to invest in more employment opportunities, particularly jobs with benefits and paid sick and vacation days.

Feedback from Surveys

Three “Community Animators” (individuals connected to their communities and able to speak multiple languages reflective of the population in their respective neighbourhoods) reached out to diverse ethno-racial residents to hear from their communities.

Community Animators shared surveys with their respective communities. 267 surveys were completed by residents at community meetings, events, and through informal networks.

The survey had three open-ended questions, asking residents to say: (i) what they most liked about their neighbourhood, (ii) what challenges they are facing in their neighbourhoods, and (iii) what changes they’d like to see in their neighbourhoods.

Residents expressed what they cared most about in their communities including the diversity amongst community members, the convenient distances from their homes to stores, access to libraries, frequent transit, and green spaces and parks in their neighbourhoods.

In contrast, key themes were brought forward from residents when asked about the challenges they face in their neighbourhoods and what priorities they feel the City should take action on to make their communities better. These included:

- 1. Unaffordable housing.**

Over half of the survey respondents said that housing is becoming more and more unaffordable in Toronto. The creation of more affordable housing units, particularly for those in low-income households, was identified as the top priority for residents.

- 2. Insufficient employment opportunities.**

Over half of the survey respondents said that there is a significant lack of employment opportunities in Toronto, particularly an insufficient number of employment opportunities or jobs with paid benefits. Precarious work makes it difficult for residents to have stability, which in turn, has affected their ability to seek decent housing, as rent is increasingly more expensive.

3. Unsatisfactory transit.

Although the frequency of transit was identified as valued by some residents in particular communities, not all residents share the same privilege. Residents identified that they want the City to prioritize making transit more accessible (i.e. both physically and geographically in all Toronto neighbourhoods), more frequent, and particularly more affordable. TTC fares were identified as being expensive, affecting residents' ridership ability.

4. Poor building maintenance and management.

Approximately half of the survey respondents reported that their apartment buildings were not clean, required more garbage disposal services, and required better building management. Residents reported one of their key priorities as needing better maintenance of their homes, in addition to better building management and services.

5. Lack of clean parks and gardening programs.

Although some residents identified as having sufficient and satisfactory green spaces in their neighbourhoods, about a quarter of residents said that there is a need for more parks in their neighbourhoods for their children to play and to have social gatherings. In addition, residents want to have the City fund more gardening programs, particularly for seniors.

C2C Budget Town Hall Event

A Town Hall Event was held on November 12, 2017. It involved two major group activities: (i) small group discussions at which people engaged in a shared vision activity that discussed what they valued and what they wished to see change to improve the City and (ii) a visual “wall mural” synthesis session at which each group posted their top five priorities. Several ideas were discussed amongst the residents that came to the event, and particular themes were identified in how residents envisioned a better Toronto.

Over eighty residents from across the City participated in the event. Volunteer facilitators were also present and took part in the discussions at the event. Similar to the surveys, facilitators asked residents four key questions: (i) what they valued about their communities, (ii) what concerns or worries they had about their communities, (iii) what they would change about community, or in other words how they felt Toronto could do better, and (iv) how they felt the City should spend its budget in the 2018 year.

Residents discussed what they valued, but also identified challenges in their communities and what they felt the City should prioritize in the 2018 City Budget. These responses were recorded on flipchart paper and then clustered on a visual “wall mural” by categories of concern such as housing, childcare, transit-related issues, etc. Key findings are reported below.

What’s Valued.

When asked what they most valued about their communities, people talked about having the relationships and infrastructure that makes their neighbourhood work:

- The high levels of diversity and interconnectedness amongst members in their communities
- The provision of spaces located close to home for people to connect with their neighbours and friends, such as community centres, parks and green spaces, and a diversity of food restaurant choices
- Shopping centres conveniently located that carry both mainstream and traditionally-diverse attire
- Having playgrounds for our children to play in
- Having the tools to access activities of daily living such as libraries where children can use the Internet for schoolwork, parents and non-parents have a means to search for employment, being able to access transit for individuals to get to their jobs, and safe spaces for people to come together and discuss ways to cross boundaries of culture, income, and housing tenure
- Having the infrastructure that allows communities to be accessible, both physically and linguistically, to accommodate for the diversity we see in a growing Toronto.

Challenges.

Participants also shared concerns. Some of the challenges they are seeing in their communities involve:

- Lack of investments into their communities. Declining transit makes it harder to access services and programs, more challenging to get affordable housing, more difficult to find affordable childcare, and more challenging to find meaningful employment opportunities
- Inequitable access to opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds (i.e. women, single parents, people with disabilities, people of colour, etc.). Some people are getting left behind
- Growing problems with transit (such as delays in TTC services, overcrowding on the subways and buses, inadequate spaces on the TTC for parents with strollers or people with disabilities, high fares, etc.)
- Poor maintenance and management of housing units
- Insufficient and expensive childcare spaces
- Inflexible hours of childcare spaces
- Not enough social services support (e.g. free recreational services for children, youth, and seniors, more job skills training locations and flexible hours of these locations, etc002E).

Common Priorities for Change.

The Visual Mural Wall Activity revealed the issues residents were concerned about. Each small group identified five priorities for change in the City. These were posted on the wall and clustered by themes. The key common themes identified were as follows:

(a) Lack of affordable housing

Affordable housing was identified as the largest concern amongst Toronto residents at the Town Hall Event. Their suggestions to help support the crisis of unaffordable housing was for the City to invest more in new affordable housing spaces with better facilities including cleanliness, accessible infrastructure and engineering in buildings, and increasing more units within buildings.

(b) Inadequate and unsatisfactory transit services

Transit in Toronto is another concern that Toronto residents identified as being challenging. There is a need to have more affordable, frequent, and reliable transit by decreasing TTC fares, having more transit facilities for seniors, and making the TTC more accessible across all subway locations and bus services.

(c) Childcare needs

There is a need for more affordable childcare spaces with flexible hours and more convenient locations. This will allow more women and single parents to go back to work and earn a decent living, while being cognizant of parents who work shiftwork, in attempts to accommodate those who do not work a 9AM-5PM job.

(d) Lack of good and meaningful employment opportunities

Toronto needs to have higher quality jobs. The precarious nature of current employment opportunities make it difficult for families to make ends meet or plan for the future. There is a need for more jobs that have benefits and paid sick days – the kinds of things that make it

easier to get by when you're working 40 hours a week. This includes having the peace of mind that one can work a full-time job and not live in poverty while doing so. In addition, there is a need to engage under-employed youth and people with disabilities to staff programs in Toronto.

(e) Overcrowded schools

The overcrowding of students in schools is a concern that has been brought forth by multiple parents. Parents worry that their children are not in an environment conducive to their health and trajectory for learning. There is a need for more schools in localized areas within Toronto for students' learning to feel fulfilled, and for their specific needs to be met.

(f) Environment needs

Residents report that the City needs to honour their commitment to poverty reduction strategies and the TransformTO climate action plan. Toronto residents are requesting for more green spaces and parks across the city, and a need for more funding and space to create and sustain gardening programs.

(g) Other Services

Additional required services that were brought forth by Toronto residents includes additional senior supports, free dental and eye care coverage for individuals ages 18-65, prioritizing infrastructure revitalization, and spending what is needed for the state of good repair to keep infrastructure sustainable.

CONCLUSION

Residents in Toronto value the diversity and success in their communities. They are worried about increasing strains on those communities. The City needs to invest in our communities and support us to make Toronto a better place to live in. Residents in Toronto have a vision of a fairer, better city and hope Council will make the choices that protect communities and ensure we have the tools and infrastructure to make neighbourhoods work. Residents hope Council will write budgets that reflect those goals, by investing in our communities and in equitable opportunities for all parts of our City. That may not mean doing anything new, but simply living up to the commitments Council has already made through the Poverty Reduction strategy and other action plans the City has already adopted – but not funded.

BACKGROUND

In the past three years, C2C has focused efforts on supporting the implementation of the City's poverty reduction strategy and on supporting a fair City of Toronto budget.

C2C seeks to support informed resident participation in the City's decision making processes. We believe everyone deserves to have an equal chance of having their voices heard and to actively be involved in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and their communities. The Toronto Can Do Better Campaign was launched by C2C as a means to help residents and community members increase their civic involvement in City decisions, particularly as they relate to high poverty and inequities that residents of Toronto currently face.

APPENDIX I

2018 Full Cost Implications of Council Approved Strategies & Service Plans

Implementation cost for Service Plan Initiatives - Operating							
Activities	Staffing	Gross	Revenue	Net (Total)	Net 2018	Additional Annualized Net 2019	Impact/Service Level
	(FTE)	(\$000)	(\$000)	(\$000)	(\$000)	(\$000)	
Strategies & Service Plans							
Parks and Recreation Plans	83	11,120	20.0	11,100	7,325	3,775	Swim to Survive expansion into phase 3, service increase for the Toronto Leadership Program, development and implementation of the Primary Program Model; Urban Forestry Service Plan, phasing in \$22 million of annual property tax fund; establish City Wide Urban Park Ranger program, rejuvenate park horticulture, increase management of natural environment trails by 50KM, enable public involvement in park horticulture, and enhance evening and weekend park maintenance
Toronto Newcomer Strategy	2.0	240.0		240.0	120.0	120.0	Additional staffing resources to meet the commitments related to the implementation of the Toronto Newcomer Strategy
Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy	2.5	505.0		505.0	126.0	379.0	32 engagement opportunities for 1600 Residents, 40 employment training workshops; 700 residents engaged in food security activities, 13 Community Hub development projects, 4 District Civic Education Initiatives, Toronto Seniors Forum and Resident Advisories supported
Transform TO: Climate Action for a Healthy, Equitable, Prosperous Toronto	49.5	6,700.0		6,700.0	6,700.0		The initial approved strategies accelerate and enhance existing City of Toronto programs and policies to maximize their potential to reduce GHG emissions community-wide while supporting improved public health outcomes, local economic prosperity, and social equity benefit. They build on Toronto's existing leadership and innovation in urban climate action to reduce carbon
Poverty Reduction							
TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy (2018 Work Plan)	8.0	54,325.0	275.0	54,050.0	38,423.0	15,627.0	Includes TCHC (Tenants First), Student Nutrition Program, and shelter expansions
Fair (Transit) Pass Program *	6.0	8,150.0	450.0	7,700.0	4,600.0	3,100.0	As per EX20.10 adopted by Council on December 13, 2016
Child Care Growth Strategy **	TBD	59,600.0	47,700.0	11,900.0	4,900.0	7,000.0	Increase fee subsidies for children 0-4 and reduce parent fees
Housing Opportunities Toronto **	TBD	18,804	18,804				The estimated annual City investment required to meet the HOT/Open Door 5-year target of 5,000 new affordable rental homes would be, on average, some \$10.0 million in funding and \$35.0 million in waived fees, charges and property taxes. The remaining affordable ownership and TO Renovates 2018 HOT shortfall would require an additional \$56.7 million. New federal-provincial funding for 2018 has not yet been announced.
Middle Childhood Strategy ***	TBD	18,000.0	14,400.0	3,600.0	3,400.0	200.0	Increase fee subsidies for children 6-12
Seniors Strategy 1.0 ***	16.00	2,050.00	750.00	1,300.00	650.00	650.00	Expand Program from 2 to 12 Paramedics with 8 Response Units. (Note: MOHLTC 50% Funding ends by 1 year.) & Short term climate/reduce TPH wait list of 3,000 seniors. Long term improve access to necessary dental care for low income seniors
Youth Equity Strategy ***	1.0	455.0		455.0	118.0	337.0	One educational attainment program, support groups in 5 NIAs, two 15-week sessions engaging 200 residents, employment connection table with 300 referrals, engage 100 program participants and complete 170 story book recordings for 150 children, outcomes framework, resources and support networks created for youth leaving incarceration
Total Impact on Operating Budget	168.0	179,949.0	82,399.0	97,550.0	66,362.0	31,188.0	
<p>Note: Since the approval of the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy, in 2015, there has been increased coordination of programs and services targeting low-income residents; many City strategies now have complementary actions aligned with one of the 17 poverty reduction recommendations</p> <p>* PRS program approved in 2016</p> <p>** All items in this strategy advance PRS recommendations</p> <p>*** All estimated 2018 investments are aligned with PRS recommendations</p>							

Implementation cost for Service Plan Initiatives - Capital							
Activities	Staffing	Gross	Revenue	Debt (Total)	Debt 2018	Debt 2019-2027	Impact/Service Level
	(FTE)	(\$000)	(\$000)	(\$000)	(\$000)	(\$000)	
TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy (2018 Work Plan)		298,000.0		298,000.0	298,000.0		TCHC capital rehabilitation plan (Tenants First)
Child Care Growth Strategy	TBD	1,400,000.0	1,120,000.0	280,000.0	2,000.0	278,000.0	Increased access to licensed child care; increase licensed child care spaces to 70,000 by 2026
Total Impact on Capital Budget & 10 Year Plan		1,698,000.0	1,120,000.0	578,000.0	300,000.0	278,000.0	

APPENDIX II

COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

July 7, 2017

11th Annual Fusion of Taste Festival
Intersection of Albion Rd. & Islington Ave.

July 9, 2017

Foodie Festival
972 Albion Rd.

July 15, 2017

Thornccliffe Park's 12th Annual Neighbours' Night Out
R.V. Burgess Park
46 Thornccliffe Park Dr.

July 17, 2017

Councillor Ainslie Movie Night
Eastview Park
33 Coronation Rd.

July 22 & 23, 2017

Big on Bloor Festival
Intersection of Dufferin St. & Bloor St. W

July 22, 2017

Junior Carnival and Family Day
Neilson Park
36 Sewells Rd.

July 30, 2017

Pedestrian Sundays in Kensington Market
Intersection College St. & Augusta Ave.

August 5, 2017

African Musical Extravaganza
5100 Yonge St.

August 27, 2017

Pedestrian Sundays in Kensington Market
Intersection College St. & Augusta Ave.

September 9, 2017
Family Fun Fair Extravaganza
Franklin Horner Community Centre
432 Horner Ave.

September 17, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
60 Lowther Ave.

September 19, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
5100 Yonge St.

September 21, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
399 The West Mall

September 23, 2017
Good Food For All Festival
1884 Davenport Rd.

September 23, 2017
Wellness Fair
48 Thorncliffe Park Dr.

September 24, 2017
Pedestrian Sundays in Kensington Market
Intersection College St. & Augusta Ave.

September 27, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
3600 Kingston Rd.

September 27, 2017
Resident meeting at Teesdale Place
70 Prairie Dr Park

October 2, 3, 4, 5, 2017
CUPE Convention
Metro Convention Centre

October 3, 2017
Scarborough Civic Action Network (SCAN) Summit
150 Borough Dr.

October 6, 2017
Mimico Resident Meeting
47 Station Rd.

October 11, 2017
Resident Meeting
105 4th Street

October 12, 2017
Community Outreach in Alderwood Neighbourhood
South Etobicoke

October 13, 2017
Community Outreach in Long Branch Neighbourhood
South Etobicoke

October 14, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
70 The East Mall

October 19, 2017
Meeting residents at Lake Shore Garden Co-Operative Homes Inc.
10 Garnett Janes Rd.

October 21, 2017
Ward 12 Trustee Alexander Brown Traffic Safety Ward Forum
100 Princess Ave.

October 21, 2017
Lamp 20th Anniversary Community Café
2 Colonel Samuel Smith Park Dr.

October 22, 2017
Tea Talk

October 24, 2017
Resident meeting
4040 Lawrence Ave. E

October 25, 2017
Birchmount Bluffs Neighbourhood Centre Seniors Poverty Animator Network
93 Birchmount Rd.

October 25, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
3600 Kingston Rd.

October 26, 2017
Polish Family Time Circle
3500 Lake Shore Blvd. W
October 26, 2017
Resident meeting
Ward 23

October 27, 2017
CUPE Child Care Appreciation Dinner

October 28, 2018
Resident Meeting
48 Thorncliffe Park

October 28, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
123 Wynford Dr.

October 29, 2017
Pedestrian Sundays in Kensington Market
Intersection College St. & Augusta Ave.

October 29, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
60 Lowther Ave.

November 13, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
60 Lowther Ave.

November 22, 2017
Toronto Climate Film Festival
3600 Kingston Rd.

November 25, 2017
Nurturing Family Engagement Parent Symposium
100 Princess Ave.

Figure 1.

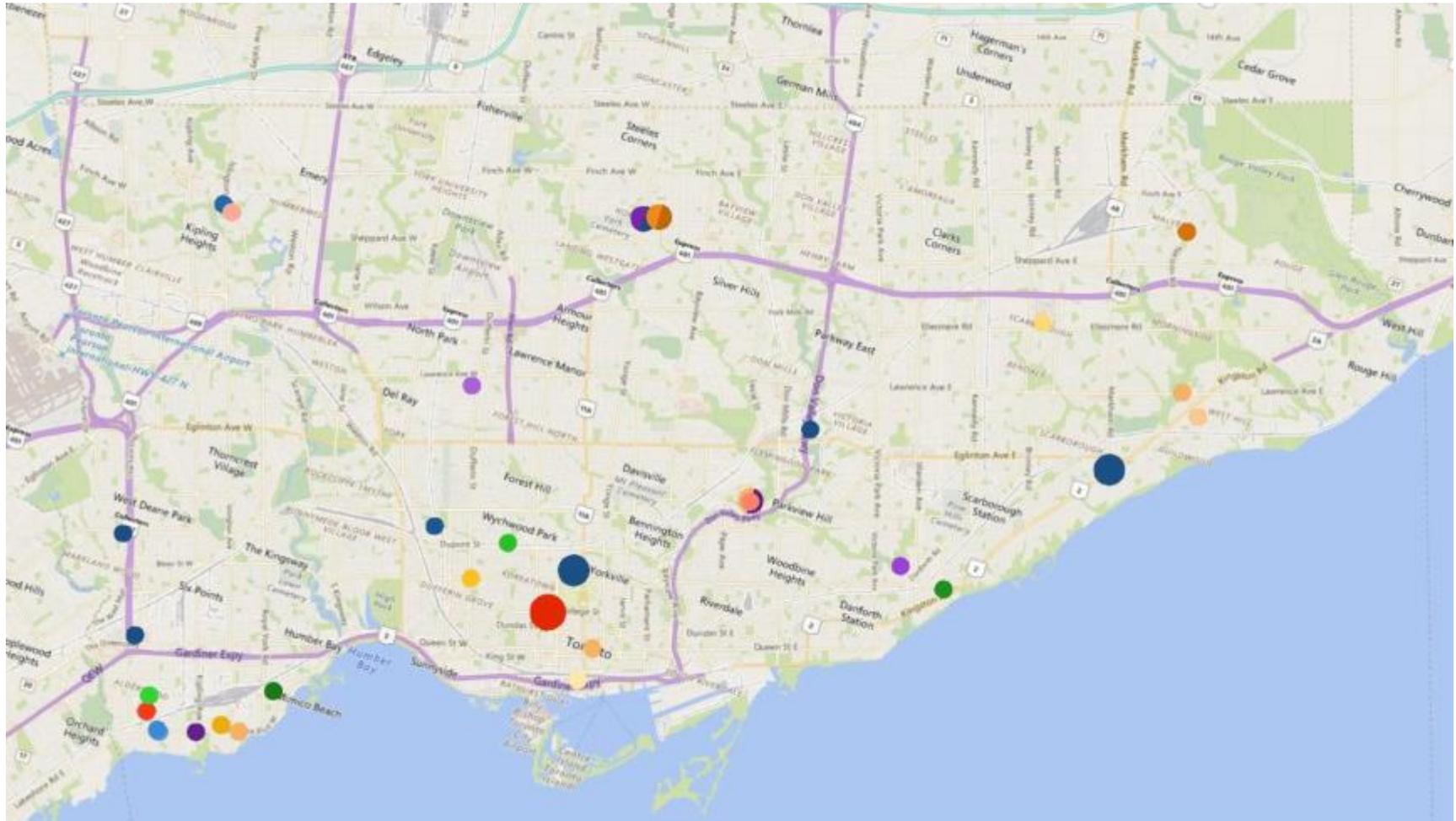


Figure 1 provides a visual mapping of community events that residents participated in. Sizes of the circles represent the number of events held at the particular location on the map. Larger circles represent a greater number of events held in that location.