Central Etobicoke Needs Assessment

June 2023

AGENDA

1. Executive Summary
2. Summary of Analysis
3. Path Forward
4. Concluding Comments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose:

The Central Etobicoke Community Hub Initiative **Needs Assessment** provides an understanding of the current deficits and needs for community services and community spaces in Central Etobicoke.

Our Vision:

Creating Community Spaces for Central Etobicoke Residents

Our Mission:

To advocate and work toward the establishment of a community hub in Central Etobicoke, offering multiple services and programs for youth, seniors, families, and individuals, nurturing healthy living, recreation, and social and cultural connections

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report:

- Is a refresh of the 2017 Feasibility Study, which identified, assessed, and prioritized community needs
- Outlines demographic information
- Captures the unique needs of our area
- Records specific areas of interest and programming needs

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report supports the work of many community groups who have been raising awareness about the lack of social services and community spaces in Central Etobicoke since the 1990s

- In preparing this report we have engaged key stakeholders, including residents of Central Etobicoke and local service agencies to assess the needs of the community

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Central Etobicoke is typically seen as affluent; however, it has multiple concentrated pockets of poverty that have historically been overlooked. It lacks community infrastructure to support its citizens.

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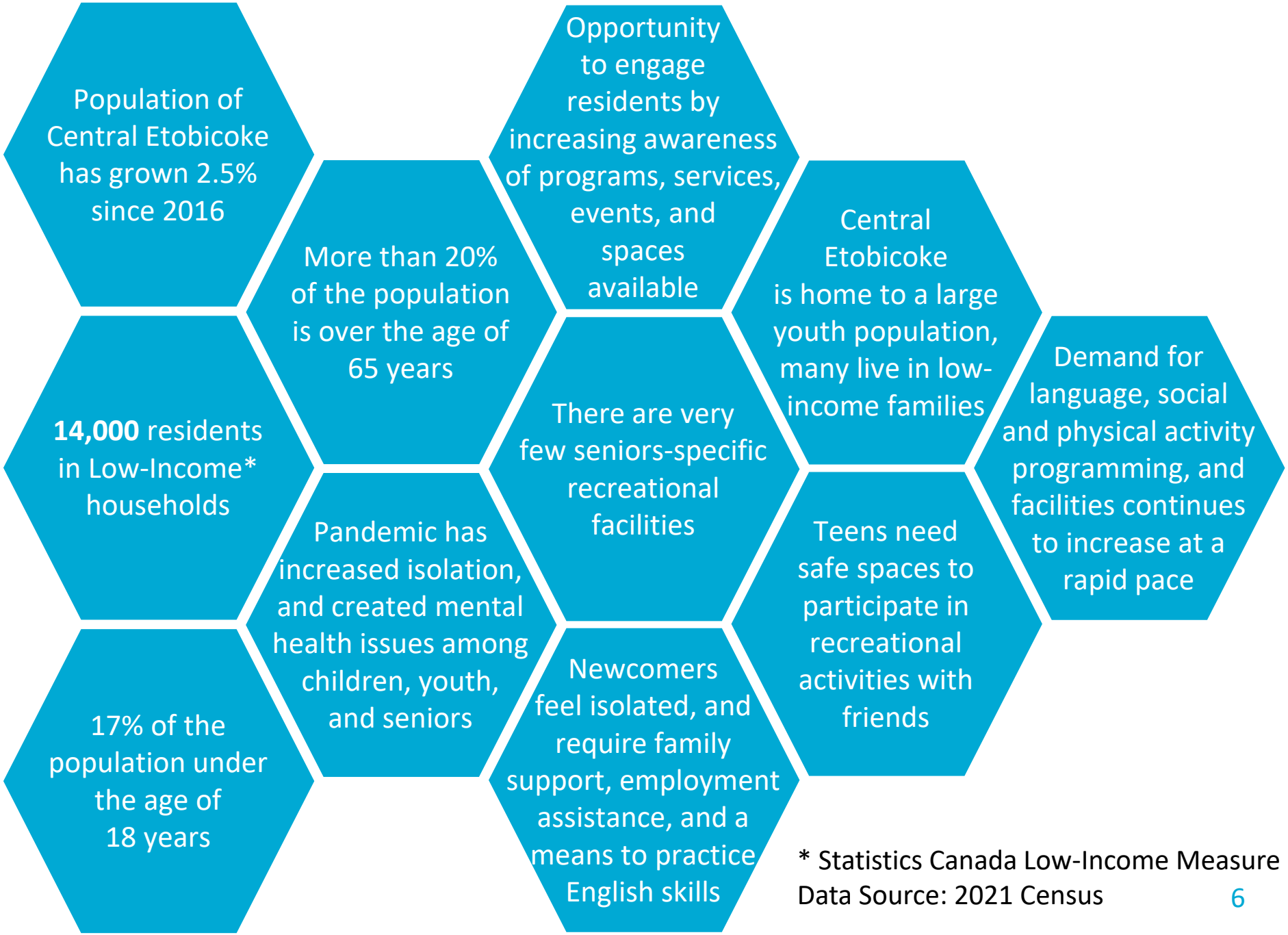

* Statistics Canada Low-Income Measure (LIM)
Data Source: 2021 Census

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Some organizations in Central Etobicoke are working to fill the identified service gaps, but more services are needed

The CECHi met with the following Agencies to identify emerging needs of the community post pandemic:

- The Alzheimer Society of Toronto
- Arab Community Centre of Toronto
- Arts Etobicoke
- Etobicoke Services for Seniors
- George Hull Centre
- LAMP Community Health Centre
- Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services
- Stonegate Community Health Centre

Other data sources used:

- 2021 Canadian Census of Population (Data retrieved March 29, 2023)
- City of Toronto Development Applications

SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

A community hub would address long-standing gaps that have further increased during and post pandemic

- The need for increased recreational services for seniors
- Inflow of newcomers, especially from Syria and Ukraine, is generating increased demand for language programs
- Post-pandemic there is an increased need for mental health services
- Pandemic exacerbated accessibility challenges and seniors and youth are experiencing increasing isolation and loneliness
- Inadequate access to community-based health care services for seniors and other marginalized populations
- Insufficient youth programming, especially drop-in youth spaces
- During and post pandemic, there are increasing cross-agency partnerships; however, space constraints are significant, which limits the degree of collaboration

SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

A community hub would address long-standing gaps that have further increased during and post pandemic

Agencies servicing Central Etobicoke have identified spatial needs to address increasing demand for services:

- Space to provide health, language, physical activity, social connection, and daycare programs
- Space to address the growing needs of seniors, youth, newcomers, and other marginalized persons

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VALUE OF A HUB

A community hub would address long-standing service accessibility gaps

- **A Central Etobicoke Community Hub Is Needed**; it should be close to neighbourhoods with the greatest need and accessible via main transit routes

- Agencies lack the space to meet the increasing demand for services; additional satellite hubs are also required to meet current demands

- A main hub with satellites are needed to service the following areas:
  - The West Mall
  - The East Mall
  - Willowridge and Richview Park along Eglinton Ave.
  - Mabelle Ave. within Islington Village
  - Dixon Rd. in Kingsview Village-The Westway

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VALUE OF A HUB

The gaps have further increased during and post pandemic

- An essential access point with satellite locations will support youth, seniors, newcomers, individuals living alone, and families, enabling them to interact and become fully engaged, healthy, socially included, and active residents

- A community hub with satellite locations would support collaboration, provide opportunities for referral and coordination, and work to improve collective impact by breaking down service silos and creating integrated supports to address the needs of the community

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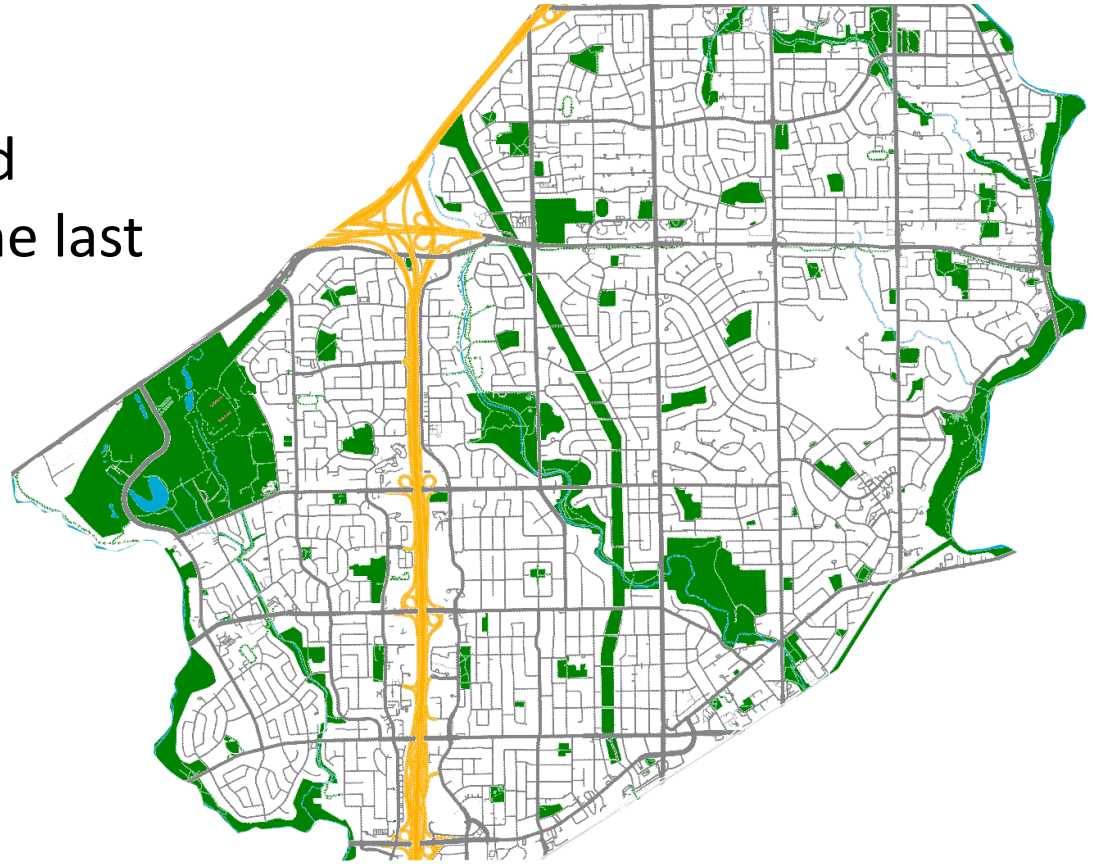
SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

In 2021, Central Etobicoke had a total population of 149,400, a 2.5% increase from 2016

The demographics of our community have changed quite significantly over the last two decades



- New neighbourhoods have formed, and there have been various waves of immigration into Central Etobicoke
- The demographics of the population have shifted with population growth, and the aging of the population
- The housing mix has also changed with the development of high-rise towers

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SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Central Etobicoke is a large geographic area composed primarily of Ward 2, with some portions of Wards 1 and 3

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Population Characteristics of Central Etobicoke

2.5%

Population growth between 2016 and 2021

Age Breakdown for Central Etobicoke Residents

17.2%

Residents under the age of 18 years.

Unchanged from 2016

62.4%

Residents aged 18 to 64 years.

1.4% growth from 2016

20.4%

Residents aged of 65 years and older.

9.3% growth from 2016.

A large proportion of residents in Central Etobicoke were born outside of Canada

44.6%

Residents who immigrated to Canada

57.3%

Of those arrived before 2001

42.7%

Of those have arrived since 2001

6.4%

Are non-permanent residents

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Approximately 14,000 residents live in Low Income* households, including more than 3,000 youths and 3,400 seniors

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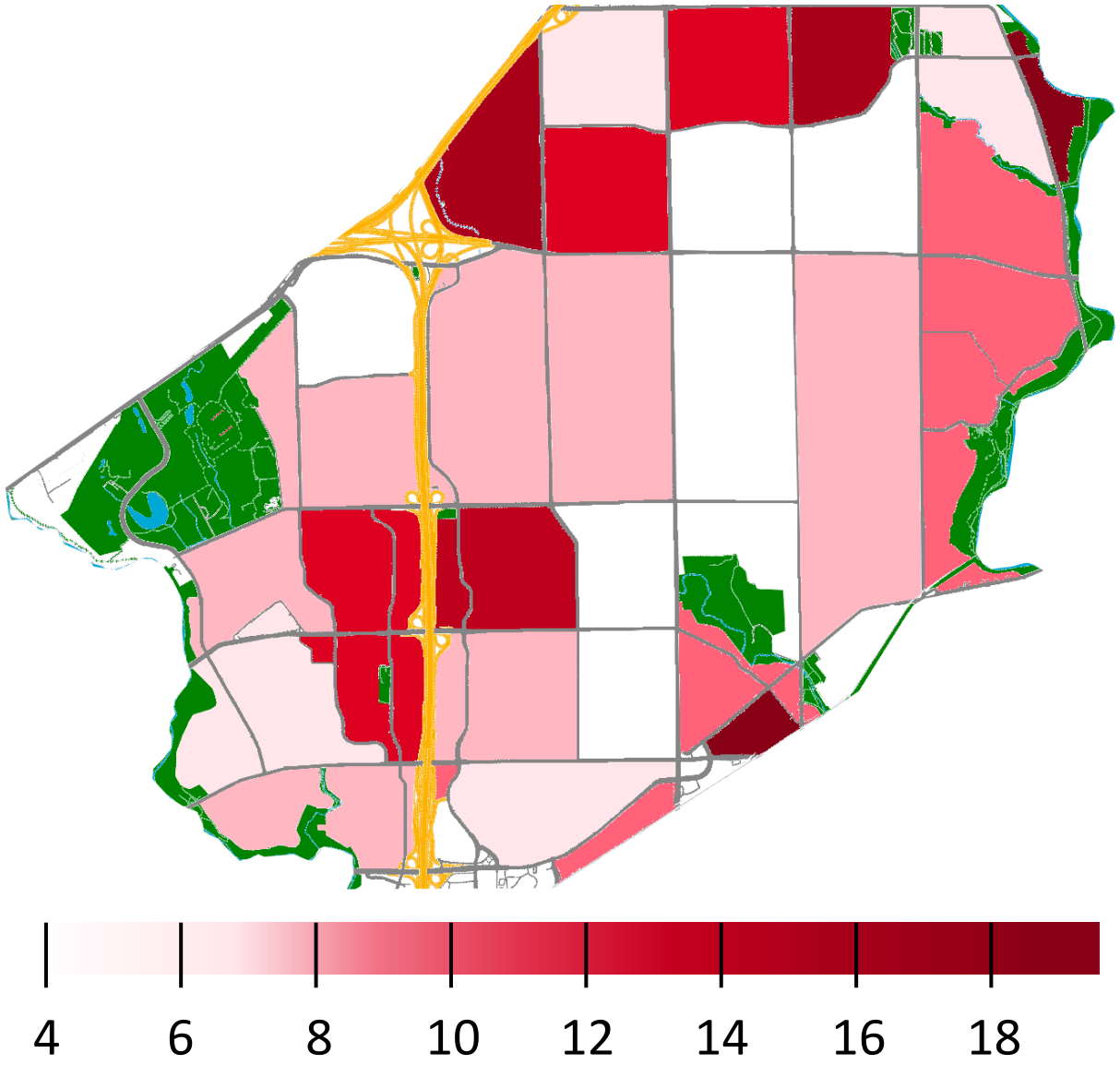
Impacts of hidden poverty

- The common perception of Central Etobicoke as a middle-class community has glossed over the reality that there are multiple pockets of poverty which include low-income seniors and working poor in private rentals, as well as several Toronto Community Housing complexes

- **Many areas** of Central Etobicoke **exceed Toronto's average poverty rate** of 13.2%, with rates as high as 19.7% in some neighbourhoods



* Statistics Canada After-Tax Low Income Measure (LIM)

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

More than
22,000
new homes
for
50,000
new residents
are proposed for
development

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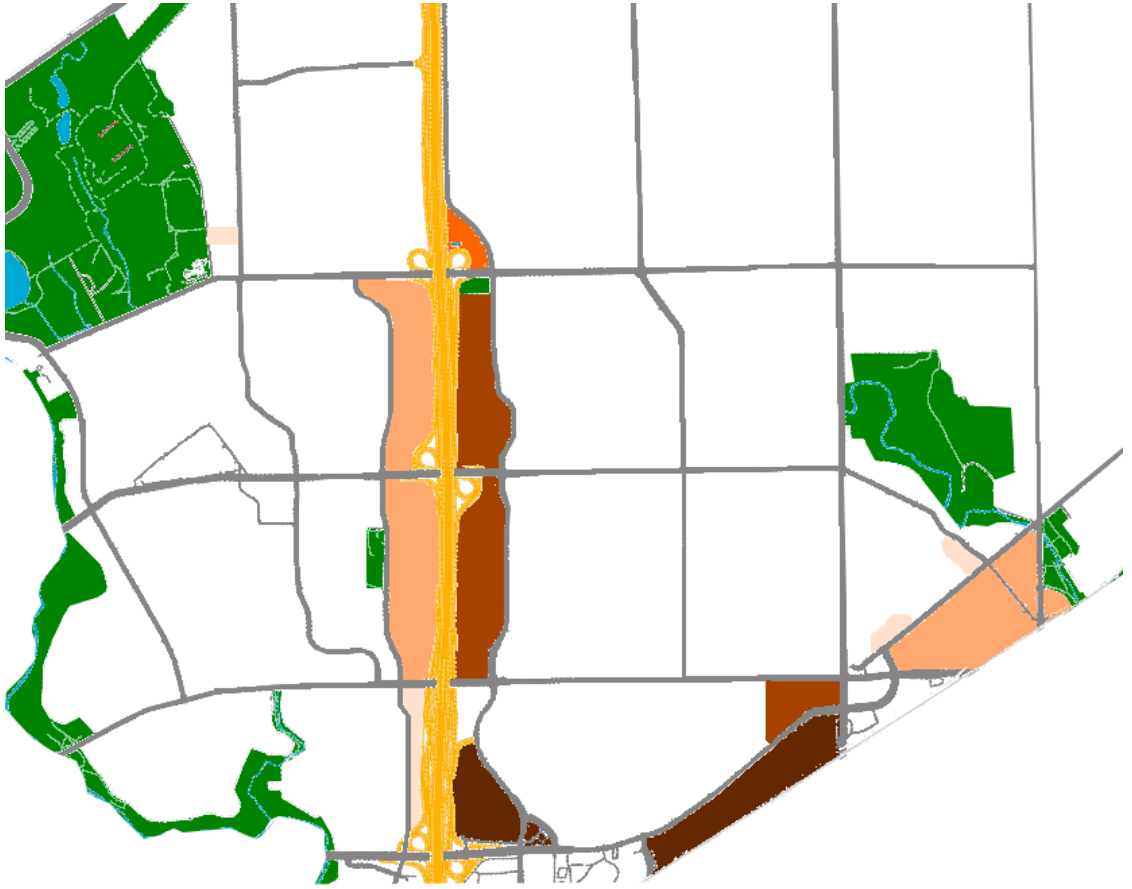
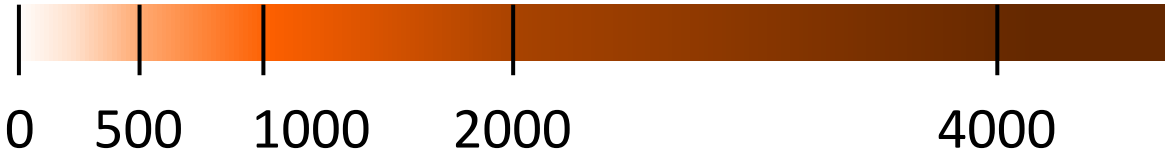
Central Etobicoke Is Growing

- The Dundas St. W., East Mall, and West Mall corridors will all experience massive population growth over the coming decade as high-rise developments are constructed
- All three corridors are already densely populated and have high rates of poverty as shown on the previous page
- Other areas experiencing intensification include the Eglinton Ave. corridor





Number of Proposed New Residential Units to be Added to Existing Neighbourhoods

Source: City of Toronto Development Applications

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Post-COVID Pandemic impact to youth, seniors and newcomers

- There has been a significant inflow of Syrian and Ukrainian newcomers to Etobicoke. Many are waitlisted for language classes (e.g., Polycultural has seen its demand for services increase from 12,000 clients pre-Covid to over 30,000 clients now)

- The pandemic created a huge children's mental health crisis that is not being adequately addressed (e.g., George Hull Centre has a revolving wait list of 400 unique families and children)

- Youth unemployment continues to be a major issue, and accessibility to employment and skills development programs is a challenge (e.g., Arab Community Centre of Toronto has enough resources to meet only a quarter of the client demand it faces in Central Etobicoke)

- Many of the agencies lack the programming, capacity, and resources / funding to meet the service demand from youth, newcomers, and seniors (e.g., Etobicoke Seniors Services has a 1,600-person waitlist for fitness and wellness programs)

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

The trends we are seeing in 2023 are consistent with those highlighted in the 2017 Feasibity Assessment

- The deficit in infrastructure and physical presence of programs and services was and continues to be a prominent theme

- During the consultation, many stated that the minimal access to community services is problematic because of the large population of youth and seniors, and the areas of concentrated poverty

- There are barriers to service access; when services are only available outside of the community, it results in long travel times or limited-service provision

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SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Three key services gaps identified in 2017 remain major problems for Central Etobicoke: Seniors, Youth, and Health Care

Seniors Services

- There are few seniors-specific recreational facilities in either Ward 2 or 3, which do not have the capacity to meet the existing demand; meanwhile, the senior population continues to grow. There was a 3.2% growth in population between 2016 and 2021.

- Agencies are finding that seniors are desperately looking to connect socially. Seniors want facilities and programs that can help them stay active and engaged socially.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Three key services gaps identified in 2017 remain major problems for Central Etobicoke: Seniors, Youth, and Health Care

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Youth Services

- Central Etobicoke is home to a large youth population, many of whom live in low-income families. 17 percent of the population is 18 years of age or younger. Many agencies state that they are unable to meet growing demand for services; space and resources are required for youth programs.

- **Youth face multiple barriers to healthy development and future success**. This problem particularly affects racialized youth living in low-income areas during a period where they are experiencing cognitive, emotional, social, and physical changes.

- There is a need for safe indoor space and programming to reduce the risk of youth engaging in anti-social behaviours which are detrimental to the well-being of themselves and the community.

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Three key services gaps identified in 2017 remain major problems for Central Etobicoke: Seniors, Youth, and Health Care

Healthcare Services

- Post-pandemic there is an **increasing need for Mental Health Service** for children, youth, and seniors

- There is a gap in health services due to the lack of community health centres in Central Etobicoke that provide primary health care and health promotion programs specifically geared toward low-income and marginalized communities

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Post-pandemic there is an increasing demand for services

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Centralized Source of Information

- There is a lack of awareness about community initiatives in Central Etobicoke because there is no centralized source for information sharing, a consequence of having little community space
- Residents are unaware of the community services, events, and programs that are available in Central Etobicoke
- A community hub could help solve this problem by functioning as a source of information, as well as a physical space

Existing Infrastructure and Facilities

- All the Agencies interviewed confirmed that there is a lack of infrastructure and facilities to meet the increase demand for services in Central Etobicoke
- There are no community hubs in Central Etobicoke
- Agencies continue to look for opportunities to expand services; however, they need facilities to provide additional services

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

Post-pandemic there is **insufficient community spaces** to meet the demand

The Need for Spaces Dedicated for Community Programs

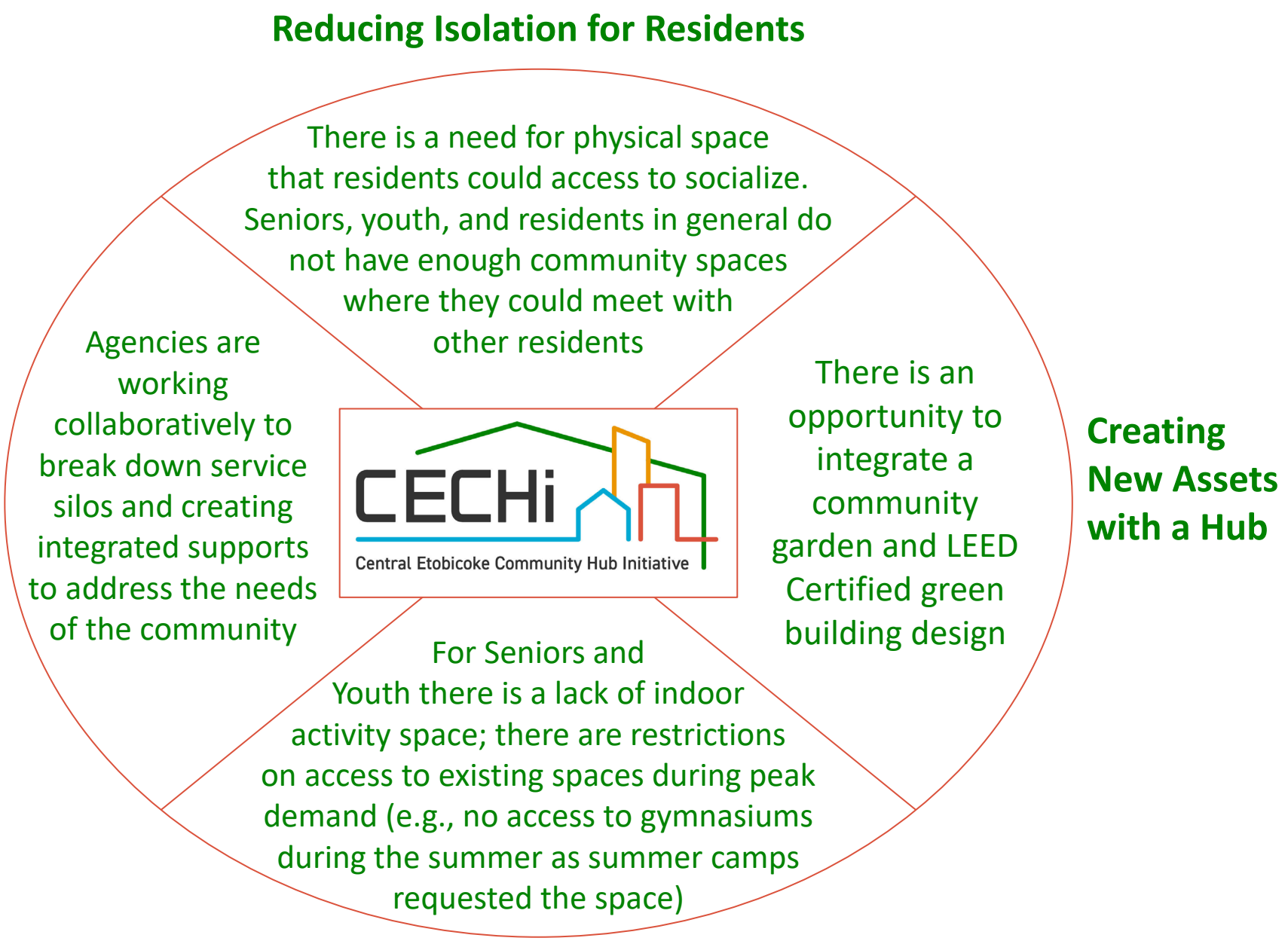
- In much of Central Etobicoke, municipal recreation programs are only available at community schools after school hours, which significantly reduces program accessibility
- There is a need for available programs during the day

Space to Connect Newcomers

- Newcomers feel isolated and have inadequate community engagement
- Due to lack of opportunities, there is a tendency to only engage with their own cultural communities, but they want to be more engaged and build relationships with diverse populations
- A centralized community space enables awareness of programs, services, events, and available spaces; it enables interaction with diverse people to practice their English skills

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

The need for unstructured community spaces that enable social connections



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THE PATH FORWARD

The Community's Expected Outcomes of Shared Space

The hub is seen as a place that provides support for education, health care, mental and physical wellbeing, with learning, legal, and social services. It can simultaneously bring the community together to create space for intergenerational engagement and bridge the gap between newcomers and long-time residents.

- Bringing youth and seniors to a shared space will lead to seniors mentoring youth
- Removing barriers to isolation and loneliness that have become an even greater problem post pandemic
- A space that would create a shared sense of identity by uniting people from various communities, where people could come together, interact, learn, and collaborate with each other; these actions would create a shared identity and a strong sense of community
- Transform how residents from diverse backgrounds see each other while encouraging the community to support one another

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THE PATH FORWARD

The main challenge to accessing vital services is a lack of community space

The objective of the Hub Initiative is to connect services, infrastructure, and residents seamlessly

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Continued population growth, coupled with the demographic shift, creates an urgent need for renewed investment in community infrastructure to support residents. There is limited access to recreational programs, few publicly owned spaces, and a lack of access to community spaces. The following are the confirmed direct service needs:

- Increased recreational services for seniors
- Community-based health care services for seniors, youth, newcomers, and marginalized residents
- More youth programming, especially greater access to open drop-in youth spaces
- Services which centralize community information, catering to seniors, youth, newcomers, and other marginalized persons especially

THANK YOU

Central Etobicoke Community Hub Initiative

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CECHi on the Web (www.etobicokehub.org)

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