

# A Community Engagement Strategy for Rideau Heights and the Wally Elmer Centre Community Hub



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## INTRODUCTION

### *Background*

Rideau Heights and Marker's Acres are adjoining residential communities in the north end of urban Kingston, Ontario. They are generally recognized to encompass the area between the Cataraqui River and Division Street and between Highway 401 and Elliott Avenue. The centre of the neighbourhood is a series of public housing developments and inexpensive rental apartments located between Weller Avenue and Conacher Drive in the general vicinity of Shannon Park and Headway Park. The Rideau Heights area, including Marker's Acres, is physically disconnected from the City, at the far north end, separated by railway tracks and industrial areas. Some people specifically distinguish the two communities and others describe Marker's Acres as a neighbourhood within Rideau Heights. For the purposes of this report we will use Rideau Heights to describe the larger community that encompasses Marker's Acres as well as the smaller Rideau Heights community.

For some time, the City of Kingston and agencies in the area have recognized a need to provide more support to Rideau Heights. The community faces many barriers and challenges, and there is need for new initiatives that strengthen the community. Stronger communities can, according to extensive research on neighborhood effects, alter long term outcomes for residents in terms of education, employment, incomes, and health. However, building the structures that support those changes is challenging. A working group, consisting of residents, service providers and representatives of the City of Kingston, came together to develop a plan. They launched new programs and projects, but also identified the creation of a community hub at the Wally Elmer Centre as a valuable element in any community development effort.

From the beginning, the working group recognized that communities develop from the inside out, and that the strengthening of Rideau Heights meant more than changing a building: it meant engaging the community. Like all communities, Rideau Heights has important assets that are central to its growth as a thriving and healthy community. Community engagement and community hub development require an attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the Rideau Heights community itself. It requires an appreciation of the community composition, community needs, community dynamics, community structures and most importantly, the ideas and aspirations of the people who live there.

Over the last five years, there have been many events and discussions designed to build an understanding of the community's needs and aspirations, and move the community closer to the rededication of the Wally Elmer Centre as a community hub and the centerpiece in a community development process. Several neighbourhood-wide forums were held by Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC), a local community group dedicated to the enhancement of the Rideau Heights. CRNC's youth wing, Jr. CRNC has held discussion groups as well. Kingston Community Health Centers (KCHC) and other agencies have developed strategic plans, conducted surveys and hosted Visioning Sessions in conjunction with the City of Kingston and other partners. Organizations, including the Kingston Boys and Girls Club, the United Way serving Kingston, Frontenac Lennox & Addington, the Kingston Community Health Centers, the City of Kingston,

Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns and Youth Diversion have worked together to identify opportunities to advance community development in Rideau Heights.

In the summer of 2007, the City of Kingston, the United Way and the Kingston CHCs enlisted the services of Public Interest to help wrap up the visioning phase and develop a strategy for deepening the engagement of the community and moving forward on the development of a community hub.

An ad hoc steering committee was struck with participation from CRNC, Kingston CHCs, the City the Kingston, the Kingston Boys and Girls Club, the United Way serving Kingston, Frontenac Lennox & Addington, and Youth Diversion, to move the project forward.

## *Methodology*

Public Interest has reviewed the documents produced through the visioning and planning processes to identify the themes that could influence the development of a community hub. These documents are listed in Table 1. These reports catalogue issues and concerns, ideas and objectives that help to define what a hub could be. A summary of the contents of those reports is included in the Issues Matrix in Appendix A.

The concerns and aspirations included in those documents formed the basis for Public Interest’s initial analysis of the prospect for developing a hub.

Table 1: Documents Consulted

A Vision for Today and Tomorrow...What a True Wally Elmer Community Centre Could be. Letters of Support.
A Vision for Today and Tomorrow... What a True Wally Elmer Community Centre Could be. prepared by the <i>Community Hub Working Group</i> , for presentation to: The City of Kingston and The Kingston Community Health Centres. November 16, 2006.
Gang forum Survey Questions, Responses from community members, <i>Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (Area 1 Committee)</i> , February 2006.
Gang forum Survey Questions: Responses from community workers, <i>Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (Area 1 Committee)</i> . February 2006.
Get Active Fair: Adult Survey.
Get Active Fair: Parent Survey.
HIP Survey Results. 2006.
Interim Report on Rideau Heights Community Hub, Wally Elmer Community Centre. Aug 16, 2006.
KCHCs Survey about Food Issues: Survey Results, Summary. August 8, 2006.
Meeting about Funding through Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation: Notes of Meeting.
North Kingston Community Health Centre Strategic Planning, Phase I: “Who Should NKCHC Serve?” Preliminary Report, <i>Junior CRNC</i> . April 25, 2004.
Notes from Meeting on Wednesday November 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2004, Location: J.G. Simcoe PS, <i>Jr. CRNC</i> .
Specialized Workshop on Gang Activity - February 23, 2006: Summary from Small Group Discussions, Sponsored by <i>Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns and St. Lawrence College</i> ,
Your Rideau Heights Community “A Vision for Today and Tomorrow”: Agenda. Monday September 25, 2006.
Your Rideau Heights Community “A Vision for Today and Tomorrow”: Visioning Session. Monday September 25, 2006

Public Interest expanded that analysis with additional research. Public Interest conducted a demographic analysis of the community using 2001 and 2006 census data to compare the input from participants in the hub development process with statistical information.

Public Interest also carried out over 30 key informant interviews with a wide variety of participants using a range of methods. Public Interest interviewed members of the community including a United Church Minister, gang members, the local City Councillor, single mothers, black youth and senior citizens to gather a broad range of perspectives. Please refer to Appendix B for descriptions of interview subjects, and Appendix C for the interview tool. Some of these interviews were conducted in scheduled, structured arrangements and some as street level interceptions. Public Interest developed a feedback tool to gather opinions from participants in the Splash Pad launch in June that generated input from over 50 other residents. Public Interest also drew on a variety of other reports from governments and community organizations indicating the ideas and concerns of the community.

Public Interest gathered information about a broad range of topics that would inform efforts at community development including:

- Issues and priorities for residents;
- Community assets;
- Interest in the development of a community hub;
- Priorities for a community hub;
- The structure of social networks in the community;
- Community dynamics;
- Barriers to community development; and
- Effective communication networks.

Public Interest sought a comprehensive picture of the community that would shape the creation of a viable action plan for community development.

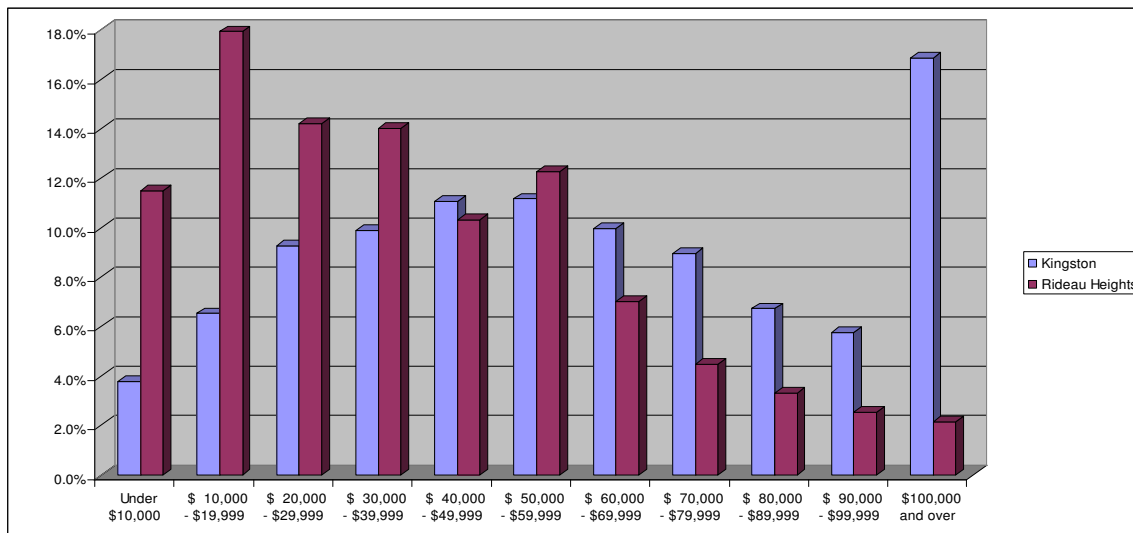
This report summarizes that data, and provides recommendations on future activity designed to engage the Rideau Heights community, initiate effective community development processes and advance the development of a community hub.

# FINDINGS

## Community Makeup

### Income

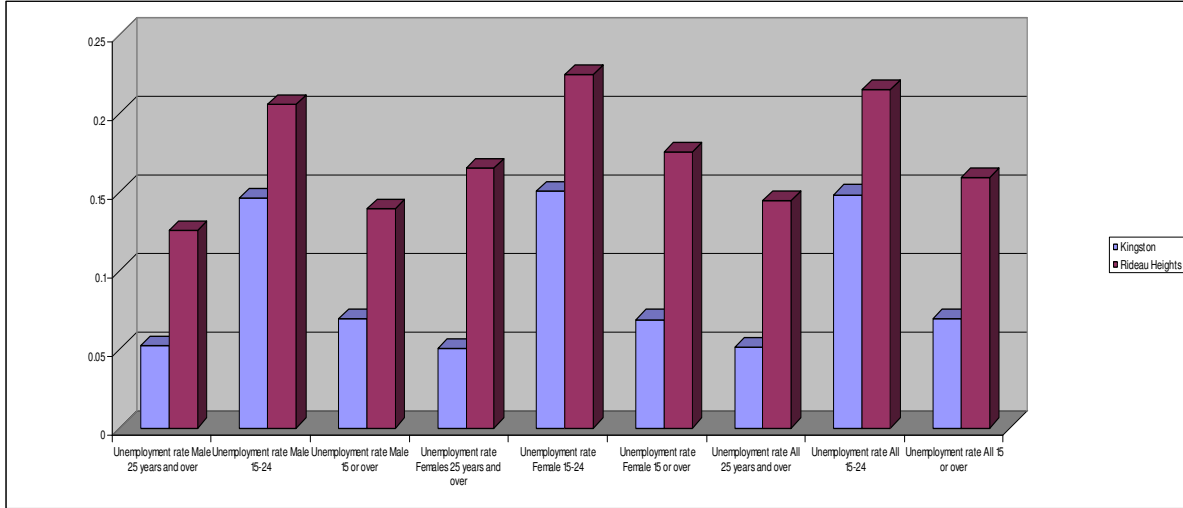
Interviews with residents and service providers alike point immediately to the best known characteristic of the Rideau Heights community: many people in Rideau Heights live on very low incomes. Rideau Heights is, as the recent report from the Mayors Task Force on Poverty points out, one of Kingston's lowest income neighbourhoods. More than 3 times as many Rideau Heights households live on less than \$10,000 a year than in the average Kingston neighborhood. One household in four has incomes under \$20,000 each year. The average income in Rideau Heights in 2001 was \$33,585, less than half the average income in Kingston as a whole (\$68,396). There are, however, small pockets of affluence in Rideau Heights predominately made up of homeowners in the north and south ends of the community.



The low incomes in Rideau Heights are not transitory. People widely identify Rideau Heights as a community “trapped” in poverty, and that impression is supported by data.

### Employment

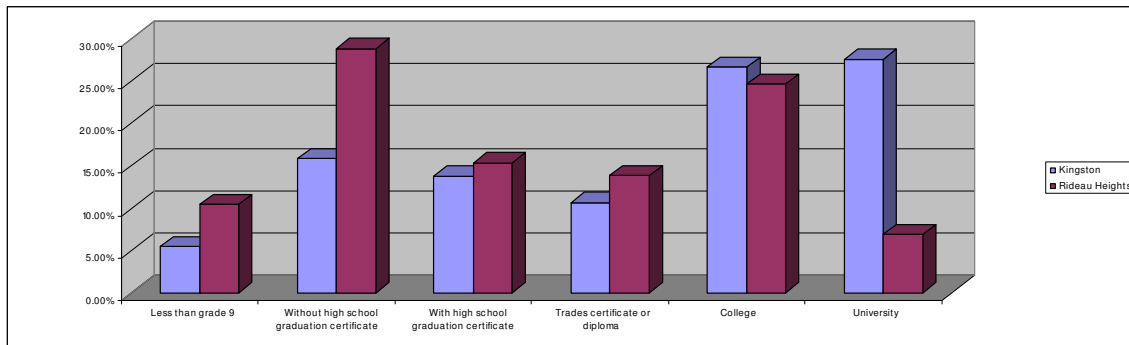
Unemployment is high in Rideau Heights (15.9%), more than double the rate for the rest of the city (6.9%). Adults are particularly hard hit, with Rideau Heights residents over 25 facing almost three times the rate of unemployment most adults in Kingston confront.



Given low rates of employment, many Rideau Heights residents rely on government benefits to make ends meet. 23.3% of households rely on benefits, about twice as many as is in the rest of Kingston (11.9%)

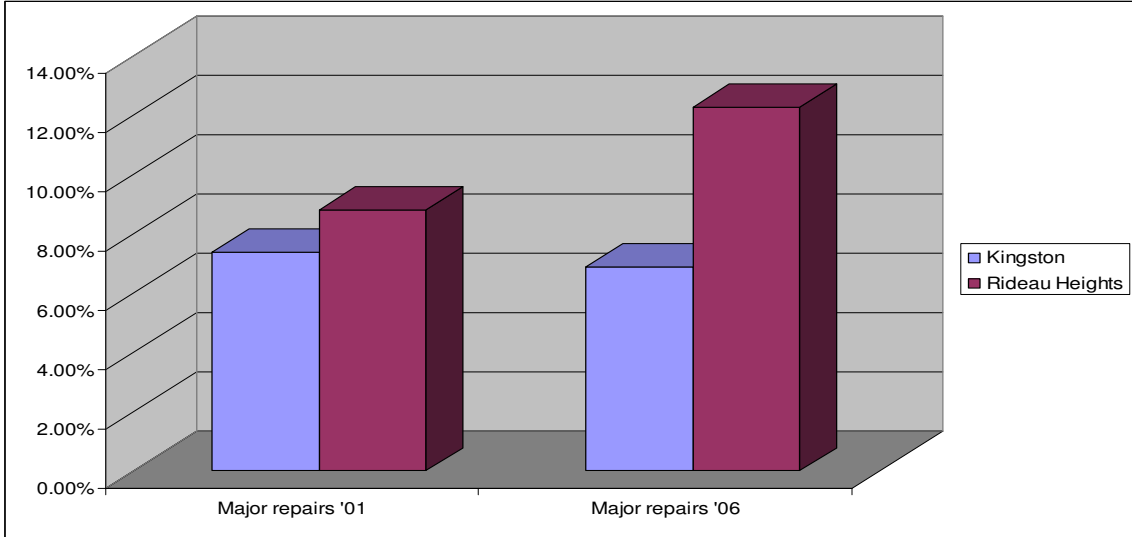
### Education

Rideau Heights residents face limited opportunity in part because limited formal education. Over 39% of Rideau Heights residents lack a high school diploma, far more than the 21.3% in the rest of Kingston. Residents and local service providers point to low literacy rates and comparatively low levels of formal education as challenges that make changing local economic circumstances very difficult.



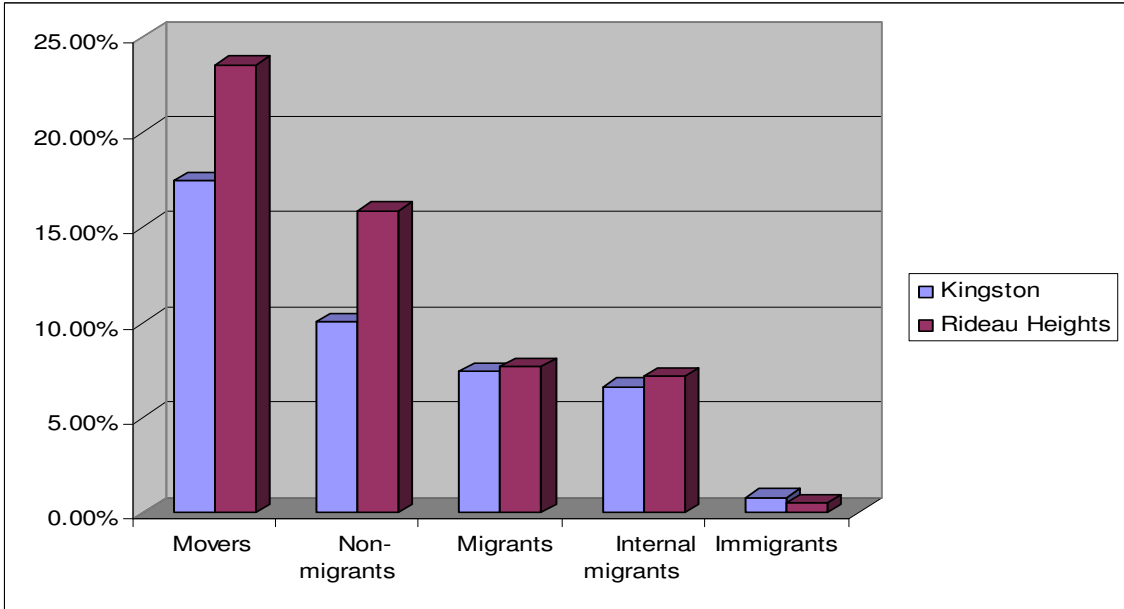
### Housing

Statistics also show that Rideau Heights residents tend to rent rather than own their homes. Over 61% of Rideau Heights residents are renters, well above the 38% average for Kingston. The homes they rent are, in many cases, provided by Kingston Frontenac Housing or other affordable housing providers. Residents often complain of declining conditions in those homes and Statistics Canada data lend support to that concern. Rideau Heights homes were about 1.5% more likely than most Kingston homes to need major repairs in 2001. In 2006, they are almost twice as likely to need major repairs.

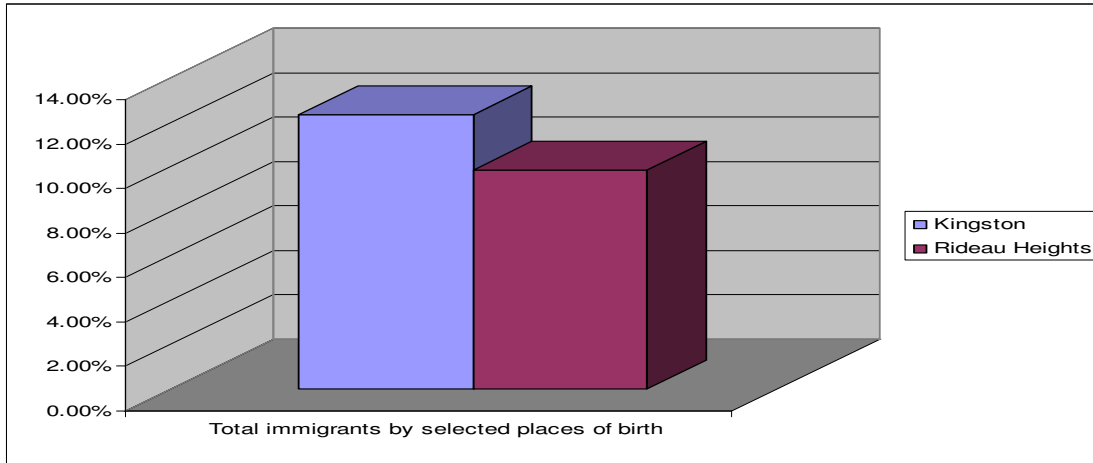


Mobility & Immigration

Residents complain about how often people move in and out of the community and statistics show that mobility rates are indeed high. Almost ¼ of the population moves each year, and more than half will move away over the next 5 years.



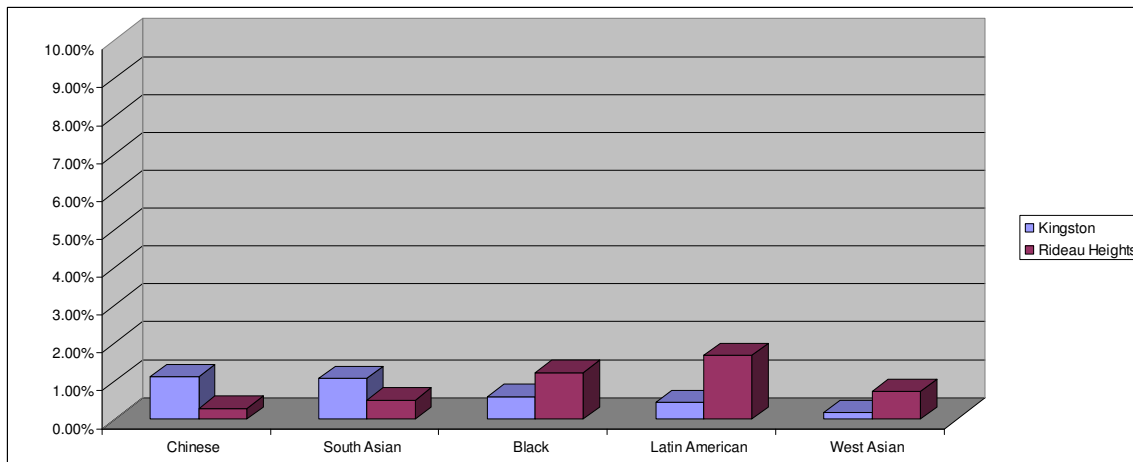
However, this mobility does not translate into immigration in large numbers. Despite the common descriptions of Rideau Heights as “diverse”, Rideau Heights appears to be less diverse than the average Kingston neighbourhood. Barely half of 1% of new arrivals in Rideau Heights each year are from outside Canada, and the total immigrant population is less than 10%, below the Kingston average of 12.38%.



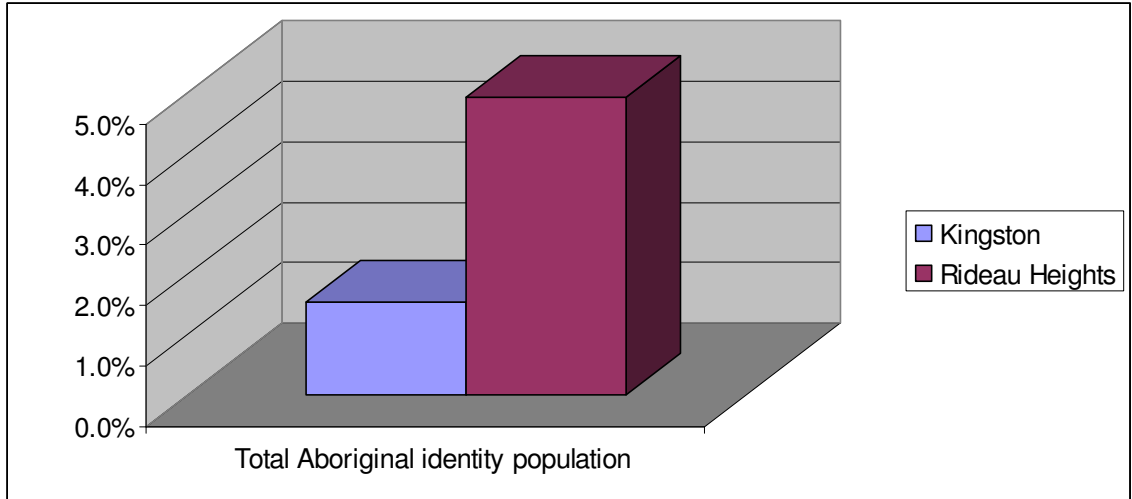
### Ethnic Diversity

What little immigration there is would not be described as especially diverse. The largest group of immigrants (28%) is from Portugal, the majority of whom appear to have arrived over 30 years ago. The next two largest groups are from the UK (21%) and the USA (8%). 6% of Rideau Heights immigrants are from El Salvador (55 people in total) and Iraq was home to 4.5% (or 40 people). As a result of this gradual pace of immigration, Rideau Heights residents are overwhelmingly English speakers and are no more likely to speak another language than other Kingston residents.

Rideau Heights does have a slightly higher visible minority population than the average Kingston community, but the difference is marginal (0.2%). The distribution of visible minorities is, however, more distinctive. While visible minorities make up less than 5% of Rideau Heights's population, they are concentrated in three groups: Black, Latin American and Arab or West Asian.



Aboriginal people also play a significant role in Rideau Heights. The Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre estimates that thousands of native people live in Rideau Heights. Statistics Canada offers a lower number, 440, but even this more modest figure makes Rideau Heights home to one in every five aboriginal families in Kingston, and makes aboriginal people three times as numerous in Rideau Heights as they are in the average Kingston neighbourhood.

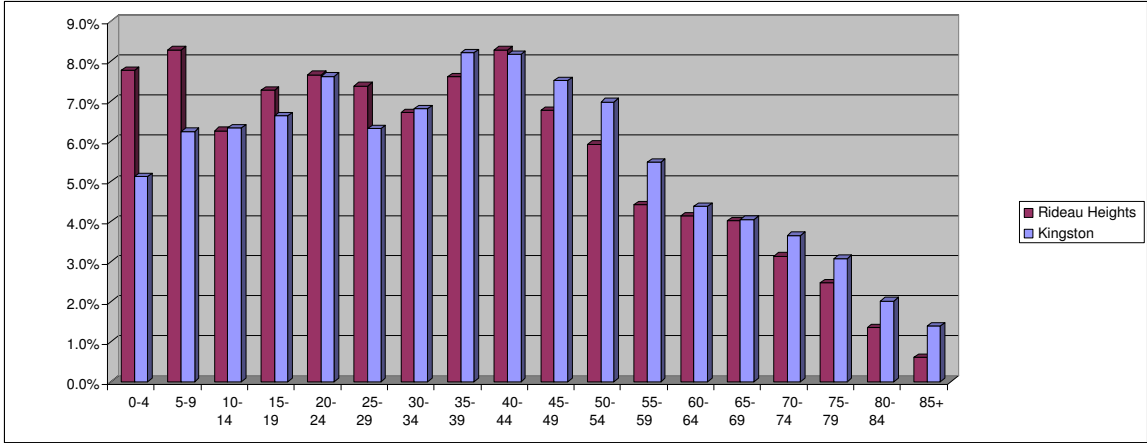


Rideau Heights’s diversity is established not through immigration but through the presence of a wide range of ethno-cultural groups with a long history in Canada.

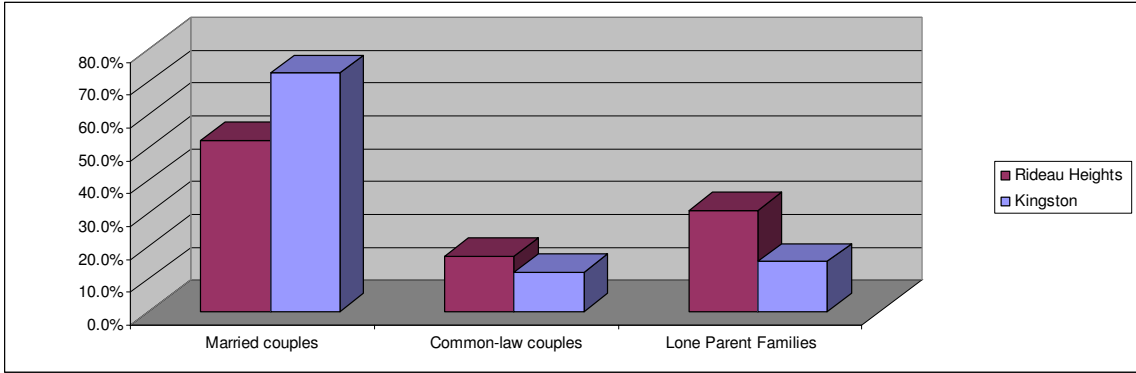
Families & Households

Interview subjects point out a wide range of challenges facing families, and the statistics support them.

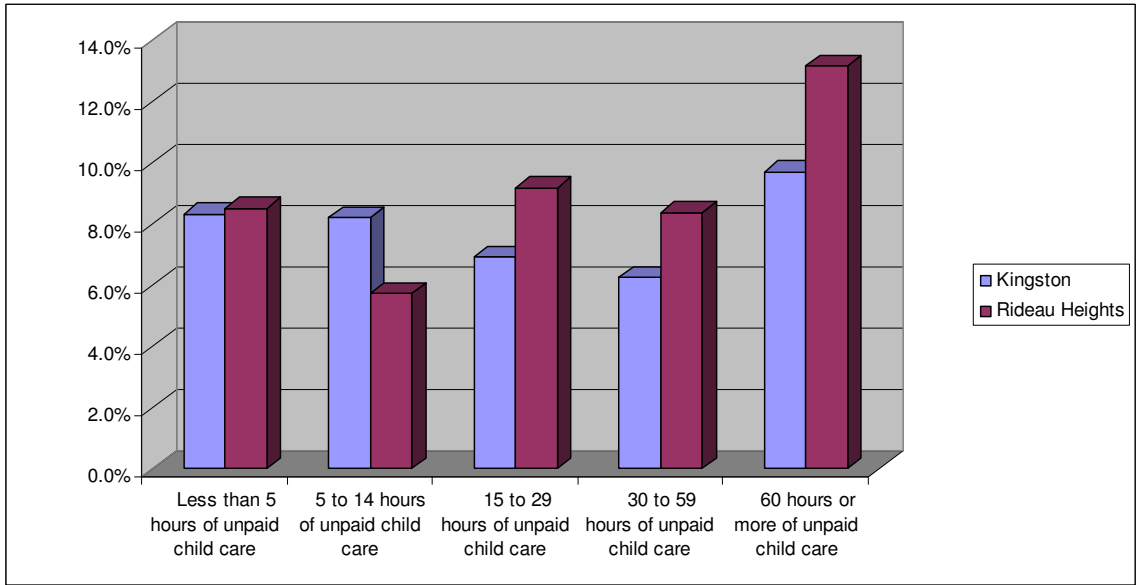
Rideau Heights is a neighborhood overflowing with children. More than one person in every seven in Rideau Heights is under 10, a proportion that is 50% above the average for Kingston. Few residents fail to note the predominance of young children.



The large number of young children would place demand on any family, but Rideau Heights families face additional challenges. Households with married couples are comparatively infrequent in Rideau Heights (39.4% in Rideau Heights, 49.9% in Kingston), and divorce and separation rates are high (17% in Rideau Heights, 11.6% in Kingston as a whole). As a result of this and other factors, lone parent families are twice as common in Rideau Heights (30.9%) as they are in the rest of Kingston (15.3%)



The absence of a supporting spouse places a considerable pressure on parents, especially those with limited means. Rideau Heights families perform far more childcare than most Kingston families, with almost one in ten logging more than 60 hours of unpaid childcare each week, high above the one in fifteen average for Kingston as a whole.



Summary

The demographics of Rideau Heights can be daunting. Rideau Heights residents face, on average, lower incomes, more unemployment and less education than other neighborhoods, and they have more lone parent families raising a larger number of children than most Kingston communities. Housing in the area is in declining repair and the community faces high rates of mobility, making it difficult to build relationships across the community. While there is no particularly large volume of immigration, there is considerable diversity when aboriginal populations are taken into account. These demographics contribute to behavioral patterns, for people inside and outside the community, that are a further challenge for Rideau Heights.

## *Community Challenges*

The barriers to success in communities are not simply a function of demographics. There are challenges that come from relationships, attitudes, expectations, behaviours, opportunities and structural supports. Rideau Heights faces challenges in these areas as well.

### Stigma

The challenge most often identified in interviews about Rideau Heights is the stigma attached to the community. Rideau Heights has a reputation. People outside the community see it as poor, run down and unsafe. Media reporting on the community does little to dispel these ideas, which appear to be widely held. Residents of Rideau Heights resent this stereotype and refute when given the opportunity, but the stigma persist.

### Fragmentation

Rideau Heights's reputation causes people outside Rideau Heights disconnect from it, but it also has an impact on people inside Rideau Heights. The largest ethno-cultural group, the Portuguese community, is largely disconnected from an active role in the community as a whole, having made their own cultural community their focus. Similarly the mobile home community of Worthington Park has generally withdrawn from participation in the broader community. Residents of Worthington Park are mostly retired and declined interviews for this project because they saw the revitalization of Rideau Heights as having little direct impact on them. In some cases, homeowners in the Rideau Heights area also are detached from the broader community, focusing on their immediate areas rather than Rideau Heights as a whole. Some homeowners make an effort to identify their segment of the community as distinct from Rideau Heights. These divisions along lines of income, ethnicity and age fragment the Rideau Heights community.

### Internal Tensions

The fragmentation of the community is further compounded by divisions within homogenous demographic groups. Rideau Heights is divided into many small social networks often based on kinship ties and friendship ties which frequently have longstanding historical roots and are occasionally accompanied by longstanding historical feuds.

### Prisons and the Community

Rideau Heights is also affected by the comparatively large number of prisons in the Kingston area and its status as one of the few communities with large amounts of affordable housing. It is impossible to accurately estimate the population in Rideau Heights that is connected to the correctional system. Families come and settle to be close to a family member serving a sentence, and while some remain in the community after release, others move on. The population continuously fluctuates. The John Howard Society of Kingston and District serves 2,300 in their institutional program including over 1,000 intakes last year, of which roughly half would have been involved in release planning and would have potentially joined a local community. People who have been recently incarcerated, and their families, face particular challenges relating to income, resources, mobility, employment, marginalization and stigma that sometimes deepen and complicate the dynamics already present for many families in Rideau Heights.

### Crime

Rideau Heights's reputation includes profound concerns about safety and crime. People from outside Rideau Heights in particular are quick to point to drug dealing, criminal activity, break-ins, vandalism and violence. They describe a community that is generally unsafe and threatening. However, the people with the most contact with the community, above all residents, describe the crime problem differently. Though crime is a serious concern for everyone in Rideau Heights, most see it as intense sporadic activity in specific locations, rather than pervasive safety issues across the community. As one resident put it: "There's usually a problem somewhere, but it moves around". Specific sites, most notably the in Headway Park lane, seem to be focal points of long term safety concerns and some individuals in the community are engaged in ongoing criminal activity. But most areas experience serious safety problems intermittently, and most people in Rideau Heights live honest lives. However, since crime is intensely disruptive when and where it occurs, crime remains a significant problem in Rideau Heights.

### Poor Services

Low incomes and a reputation for crime do not draw business to a community and Rideau Heights is significantly underserved in most areas. The area currently has no grocery store, no bank and no post office. There is no library in Rideau Heights and there are few programs for children and youth. Residents complain of poor transit service and note that their transfers can expire in the time it takes them to get to a connecting bus route.

### Abandonment and Distrust

People in Rideau Heights are acutely aware of the stigma imposed on them and the poor services they receive. Some residents call the area "the forgotten land" reflecting their belief that no one cares about, or even notices, Rideau Heights. Residents express surprise when services are provided and jaded resignation when they are let down. They feel isolated from the rest of the City and a strong sense of alienation feeds a noticeable distrust of public institutions. Residents express a lack of confidence in Kingston & Frontenac Housing, the Children Aid Society, Ontario Works and other city institutions. They express a range of feelings about police, welcoming the protection police provide, but expressing a preference for a more engaged, accessible form of policing that feels more like a partnership.

### Summary

Stigmatized, fragmented, broken up by internal divisions, disrupted by threats to safety and cut off from the services and supports, the Rideau Heights community feels a sense of abandonment and distrust that will make engaging the neighbourhood in community development opportunities difficult. These issues, widely experienced, are perhaps even deeper for the population associated with the correctional system. Addressing these challenges, for all groups, will be critical for supporting community development in Rideau Heights.

## ***Community Assets***

Communities are not defined by their challenges. Their principal characteristics stem mostly from their assets, and how they use them. Like all communities, Rideau Heights has assets that define the character of the community and offer valuable guidance to how organizations and institutions working to strengthen the community can play a successful role.

### Close-Knit Social Networks

With the many challenges confronting Rideau Heights, the community has built up a resilience that is remarkable. Cut off from the City by railways and industrial lands, caught in high levels of poverty and unemployment, feeling abandoned by service providers and distrustful of institutions, residents have turned to each other for support. Residents in Rideau Heights comment on the strong sense of community they have. Though many people in Rideau Heights move on, many others have stayed for generations. They have a powerful sense of belonging and an intense pride at having stuck it out in a neighbourhood they believe the rest of the City turned its back on.

Instead of relying on outside institutions and organizations, Rideau Heights residents built tight social networks they could trust. People in the community describe historical social networks as kinship-based, with family members and close friends bonding together for mutual support. Over time, social networks broadened to include other residents in the same apartment building or housing complex. Many networks now are as much geographic as they are kinship based. Distinct networks exist in other areas of Rideau Heights. Homeowners in the north and south end of the community, and mobile home residents in Worthington Park have separate internal networks of their own, and there are limited connections between the two.

Close knit communities that keep people together also tend to keep people out. Social networks in Rideau Heights tend to be strong but exclusive, making the community insular, viewing outsiders with suspicion. As one resident put it: “Everyone knows when someone comes into the neighbourhood”. Respected local educators talk about the half decade they needed to build trust with the community. Operators of popular community programs describe the years of steady work, building participation slowly. People in Rideau Heights have had their fair share of disappointments and they are not quick to confer confidence on people from outside the community.

### Effective Networks

Those dense networks of support can be impressive. Residents tell stories of people in the community helping a family that had experienced a house fire, arriving with food and clothes before the Kingston Fire Department had even gotten there. There are repeated demonstrations of intensive support with people digging deep into limited resources to help their neighbours through tough times.

Children are central to the commitment to the community. People who know the community well describe active families with intense commitments to the success of their children. They describe parents who invest their scarce resources to start children’s programs, face dangerous conditions to ensure the safety of children, rally around families whose children are in crisis and take great pride in the accomplishments of local children.

### Broadening Social Networks

When residents and service providers in Rideau Heights describe changes in the community, they often cite the gradual opening up of social networks. They say Rideau Heights is “not as closed” as it used to be ten to fifteen years ago, and identify relationships outside the traditional social networks that are playing increasingly important roles. People in the area describe social networks that are growing around services now. Participants in the Salvation Army Dinners, the Better Beginnings programs, church groups, social clubs and activity groups are building relationships based on those interactions. That is broadening the range of networks people are engaging in. This opening up

provides valuable opportunities for connecting to a historically very insular community through service providers and social organizations. However, with so few services and so few places for people to gather other than their homes and porches, kinship and geographic networks continue to dominate the social networks in Rideau Heights.

### Schools

Though Rideau Heights residents are slow to trust outsiders, some local institutions have won the respect of residents. Residents identify schools as part of what makes their community work. People see local schools as making a consistent effort to serve local children in effective and appropriate ways. However, while trust in schools is increasing, teachers still concede that many parents feel uncomfortable in school offices or at formal school meetings. Trust for institutions will only go so far.

### Services

Although services are in short supply in Rideau Heights, the ones that have shown a commitment to the community have earned trust. Better Beginnings, the Boys and Girls Club and the Community Health Centre in particular are cited by residents as important community assets. Staff in these organizations underscore their steady commitment to the community as a key element in their success. Long term program development that built up slowly, consistent faces that became familiar over time, and the hiring of local residents in staff positions all helped earn those organizations the trust most outsider institutions cannot gain.

### Facilities

Residents and service providers express particularly strong support for the Splash Pad and for the Wally Elmer Centre. The Splash Pad, which opened shortly before interviews began, was mentioned often, not only as a great facility but as a symbol for the community. Residents and service providers both noted that the Splash Pad has been free from vandalism despite a higher rate of vandalism in the area in general. Residents also noted their longstanding doubts that the Splash Pad would really be built, and see its opening as a sign that they may not have been completely forgotten. Some hold out the same hope for the Wally Elmer Center. The retention and expansion of this popular facility, at the centre of the community, is seen as a potential signal of a new era in Rideau Heights, say residents. Service providers point to the comparatively high turnout at the community meeting on the future of the Centre, and the intense support it received at that meeting, as signs that Wally Elmer could be a centerpiece in improving community engagement in Rideau Heights. But residents are far from confident that the outcome for the Wally Elmer Centre will be a positive one.

### Churches

Many of the churches in Rideau Heights have a strong local congregation and others offer programs with a healthy local participation rate. Food programs at the churches have become an established part of local life. The Carnival hosted by the Salvation Army draws a big crowd after years of slow growth. People feel connected to their local churches and their sense of belonging helps make the churches a site for developing new social networks.

### Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC)

CRNC was among the most often mentioned assets in Rideau Heights. Its effort to address the challenges of Rideau Heights from within the community fits the neighbourhood's sense of self reliance. People in Rideau Heights like that the efforts to strengthen the community is led by local

residents and they have a sense of ownership over it. They may well respond the same way to community development efforts in which their sense of ownership is similarly supported.

### Summary

Rideau Heights has a host of assets that provide considerable guidance on how to engage with local residents. The history of isolation that Rideau Heights feels has fostered strong, internal networks that provide mutual aid. These networks were built on close ties, often family ties, which involved strong commitments. But Rideau Heights is changing. The dense social networks that have made it resilient in the past are opening, marginally, to include a range of new networks, centered on programs and activities. Not surprisingly, the institutions, services and facilities people express support for generally focus on children, further reflecting the strong community focus on young people. The institutions and mechanisms that work well in the community are longstanding structures that demonstrated commitment to the community. They built their role gradually over time, fostered a sense of belonging and were open to community leadership and community ownership. Future efforts at community development should use these examples as guides to success.

## A COMMUNITY HUB AT WALLY ELMER

In a community like Rideau Heights, the first thing to find out about a proposed program is whether or not the people in the community see a need for it. In the case of a hub at Wally Elmer, the answer couldn't be more emphatic. Residents and service providers rarely said "yes" to the prospect, preferring answers like "definitely" and "absolutely" (the top two responses).

No respondents expressed any reservations about creating a hub, and most had a strong sense of the role it might play. Interestingly, the most common initial response emphasized the ability of a community hub to "bring people together". The role of the hub as a source of programs for children and youth is the second most commonly identified role.

People identified a wide range of programs and activities that they wanted to see the centre provide. Some were wildly overenthusiastic, but most were highly practical and fairly consistently identified by respondents through interviews, casual conversations and community meetings.

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

Not surprisingly, most people enumerate a long list of programs for children and youth (predominately sports activities) when identifying activities for the hub. As discussions with key informants extended however, the focus shifted to supports and skills for adults and families. Literacy programs, health services, social events and ways to promote community-wide gathering are mentioned almost as often as programs for children. Residents are aware of the need for access to supports for adults, but their self-reliance, distrust of institutions and focus on children make those issues ones they are slow to bring to the fore.

In interviews, people emphasize a need for an approach that is appropriate, as well as programs that suit their needs. People call for an open and visible centre that is welcoming and connects the community together. People talk about the Centre serving as “the heart of the neighbourhood” and, as with the Splash Pad, a symbol that north Kingston isn’t really a “forgotten land”.

That role means constraints on the approach to developing the hub. People describe services and programs that are easy to access, favouring, for example, drop-in programs and one-time events over membership driven activities that require steady attendance.

### *Successful Community Engagement in Rideau Heights*

Interviews with residents and service providers in the community provide a fairly clear direction about how community engagement can work in Rideau Heights. The direction they provide reflects the assets and challenges in the community. By looking at the more successful efforts to engage residents in programs and activities in the past, many of these guidelines can be illustrated effectively.

#### Be prepared to build participation gradually:

Residents and service providers encouraged engagement that was consistent, gradual, and built steadily. The Salvation Army Carnival is a good example of a slowly developed program that has become a neighborhood institution. The long term commitment of the Better Beginnings to North Kingston is part of their ability to reach the community effectively. Early participation will be modest and early responses will be cautious, they say, but stick to it.

#### Make it welcoming and easy to get involved in.

“Do the easy, fun stuff first” said a resident. People will be slow to sign up for anything, and will be wary about commitments until they are sure about the centre, but will participate in fun, one-off, up-beat events. The Salvation Army Carnival and school fun fairs have learned this lesson. Free skating, Christmas parties with crafts and games, movie nights and dances are all suggestions that support the fun side of building community. More serious programming can grow as participation expands.

#### The center should focus on children, but serve everyone.

The community is child centered, but many adults need supports, often from institutions they are not eager to work with. A child centered hub that offers adult opportunities to casually interact with other services makes it easier to get over that barrier. One educator described setting up adult services in the school, so people in need of support could use the services when they dropped off their children, creating a convenient, easy way to connect to services and avoid any stigma involved since the process of seeking help would be invisible to others.

### Make it familiar.

Programs that are embedded in the community and make an effort to become familiar engender more trust. Better Beginnings, the Kingston Community Health Centers and the Boys and Girls Club hire from within the community and maintain consistent core staff who are in frequent contact with residents and know the names of the people walking through the door.

### Work with partners.

Programs that drew on multiple networks were more successful. The Boys and Girls Club worked in partnership with schools and churches to build participation through every avenue. Wally Elmer should work with all three, plus local recreation programs, the Kingston CHCs, Better Beginnings, Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre, the John Howard Society and other well-established community groups and service providers.

### Make it safe.

The hub will fail if people don't feel safe coming there. The space and the programs should be supervised, if only by volunteers. The Kingston CHCs have volunteers, as do other local organizations that could play a role in early efforts. Volunteer recruitment in later stages could help build participation and involvement in the centre. Regardless of the method, though, there should be someone in charge all the time and people should know who and where that person is.

### A Community Centre, not an institutional centre.

Community leadership is important to a self-reliant community, as such the Centre should be seen to be responding to residents' priorities as well as supporting local residents in leadership roles. A lack of confidence in major institutions still exists, so a centre seen to represent institutional interests and dominated by major institutional partners will face greater difficulty. Prominent presence of partners like the CAS, OW or Kingston Frontenac Housing and to some extent the police will make it harder for the Centre to be seen as welcoming, familiar and resident-led.

### Avoid barriers.

Residents were clear that even modest barriers could become insurmountable. Providing childcare, minimizing fees and offering coffee and food can help bring people in who might otherwise stay away. If one of the hub's roles is to bring the community together, the breadth of participation is as important as the depth.

### Food helps.

Programs centered around food, from the good food box to community dinners, engage families effectively. Bringing food programs into the Centre will bring families in with them.

### Get going.

"Don't talk it to death" said one resident. Rideau Heights has had more than its share of disappointments, so people believe things are happening when they see them happening. Several residents gave advice that is best summed up as "if it's working, they will come." Early activity and early successes will make success far more attainable.

### Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Given the disengagement of the community, the fragmentation of the networks in it, and the high mobility rates in the neighbourhood, a facility that successfully serves Rideau Heights and brings people together will need to communicate constantly.

## *Communication Strategies*

Participants in the interviews were open with advice about communications and equally open about the weakness of communications systems in the neighbourhood.

An avenue for communicating with the local First Nations community is through the Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre; few alternate routes exist. KNFC is interested in working with the hub to reach aboriginal people in the area and to partner on programs and events where appropriate.

Churches and school have been effective communications tools for other programs and they too have expressed keen interest in participating in the development of the Centre and supporting efforts to bring the community together. Schools provide important opportunities for communication during drop-off and pick-up as well as through notes that can be sent home with students. Churches have the capacity to convey messages to their networks and can post notices for parishioners.

Popular local sites provide the next most attractive line of communications. Residents encouraged outreach through the Community Spirit Bingo Hall at Montreal and Elliott Streets as a place that connects well to the community and is popular with local residents.

Coffee shops, laundromats and local stores, especially Sunshine Variety, were identified as good opportunities to circulate information or post flyers.

However, word of mouth was recognized as the primarily communications tool in Rideau Heights. Reaching out to people on their porches, telling central figures in social networks, spreading the word at community events are all tools for getting the word out. In many communities, word of mouth has become a relatively infrequent tool for communication. But in Rideau Heights it is surprisingly effective. Public Interest's efforts to reach out to people on porches yielded nine interviews in the span of a day, more than what was organized by using contact lists and telephones the week before. One key informant told us she routinely talks with dozens of people and discusses matters widely, simply by sitting on her porch. In just 30 interviews Public Interest was able to identify over a dozen willing participants who connected to different segments of the community and would be valuable assets in a word of mouth campaign. Word of mouth communications need long lead times and is unpredictable as a communication mechanism, but it appears to be well worth the effort in Rideau Heights.

## *An Action Plan for Wally Elmer*

The community has provided some clear direction on the establishment of a community hub at the Wally Elmer Centre and on the creation of community development efforts. Their guidance has clear and concrete implications for how planning proceeds.

### **1) Announce intentions as soon as possible.**

As soon as possible, the Hub Steering Committee should make a clear announcement about plans to create a community hub in the Wally Elmer Center. Preemptively announcing plans for a project that is meant to be community-based is not normally advisable; most community

development projects build their base of support and roll out their plans as the community comes on board. However, Rideau Heights is a more challenging environment. There are such profound doubts about the commitment of institutions to the community that gaining momentum and participation will be difficult unless those doubts are dispelled at an early stage.

It will be an important step for the steering committee, or some of the partners on it, to announce their intention to see Wally Elmer develop into a community hub or community centre. To further dispel concerns and distrust, the declaration should include a commitment to a leadership role for the community and the creation of a governance model that is inclusive.

The declaration should be treated as a significant communications opportunity. It should involve residents and should clearly indicate that an engagement effort designed to shape the Centre, develop its programs and establish its governance will follow.

## **2) Develop a balanced but inclusive governance model based on the East Scarborough Storefront Hub.**

One of the barriers to early announcement is the absence of an inclusive governance structure. If the hub development is getting underway while the while the community is still becoming engaged, how can the community play a leadership role? Faced with a similar barrier, the East Scarborough Storefront, a community hub in Toronto, adopted a novel governance structure that allows extensive community involvement while the engagement process grows, as well as allowing for the development of a more traditional structure once engagement is well established.

The East Scarborough model separates program management from governance. As a hub, the East Scarborough Storefront has few staff, and offers most programs through partner agencies that use the space. Programs are managed by the partner agencies that provide them, and the partner agencies jointly sit on a Program Management Committee to address issue that have an impact across programs.

The Program Management Committee sends representatives to a Steering Committee for the hub, which also has community representation. In the early years of the hub development, the community representatives were selected by the Steering Committee. To ensure accountability to the community, the Storefront also instituted “Community Speaks”. These events are open gatherings that allow the community to discuss and debate key issues affecting the hub. The recommendations collected from Community Speaks are taken up by the Steering Committee for implementation.

This loosely accountable structure allowed the hub to get underway and build community services while the community engagement process grows.

A similar model was used by the Scarborough Village community hub. In this process however, an emergent local community association took responsibility for electing community members to a Community Services Committee that oversaw community issues, such as emerging service needs and priorities. The Community Services Committee replaced the Community Speaks as the primary source of community input and the Community Services Committee selected the community members of the Steering Committee. This later model may be more appropriate for Rideau Heights when the community engagement process has developed farther.

The East Scarborough Storefront model and the Scarborough Village model provide sound starting points for inclusive, balanced governance systems that the Wally Elmer Centre can use to develop the hub, while community engagement gets underway. These models also gradually introduce residents to increasingly responsible roles at the centre and help build the kind of leadership a long term community development strategy requires.

**3) Start offering child-focused programs centered on fun, simple activities and events, with adult programs taking a secondary role.**

Making precipitous decisions about programming is normally undesirable. Programming should grow from clearly identified community needs in an open community process. However, there is a need to demonstrate commitment to moving forward on the hub and to provide concrete opportunities for engagement. Creating some programming now is the best way to achieve those goals. This report provides a list of programs that are based on preferences and priorities identified by the community and can be used to make choices about initial program offerings. The fact that programs offered are chosen from recommendations by the community should be pointed out as programs are introduced.

People in the community have indicated a desire for easily accessed programs. They prefer drop-in models over membership or sign up programs, though hybrid programs (with a sign up requirement but flexibility around attendance) are also successful in setting like this. Parent/child drop in programs, pick-up sports and card nights are all programs the community has identified. These are opportunities to attract people to the Centre, engage them and connect them together.

There is a desire for an event-driven component of the centre. Many participants mentioned the attraction of fun, one-off events as a way to engage people without demanding too much from them. Simple fun activities such as a Christmas party with free skating were mentioned. Expanding those events with craft programs and other activities could enrich the event and more thoroughly engage participants. Non-denominational options like a Valentines Day party may be preferable, though 98% of Rideau Heights residents practice Christian religions. These events would attract participants who might not be drawn to more formal programming, and may attract a demographically wider range of participants. One-off events avoid commitments to long term costs and are easier to offer on a “no fee” basis, which would in turn increase participation and accommodate a significant neighbourhood concern.

Respondents have repeatedly advised a child and youth focus to the Centre. It is a child focused community and that preference is not unexpected. Adult programming is also sought but should be a secondary feature, less emphasized and less obtrusive than the children’s programs. Adults who are uncomfortable seeking help will be more at ease visiting a child focused centre, ushering their children to broomball, and then stopping in to an adult literacy session or a community health program discreetly.

The sooner the hub can begin to pursue these program options in a sustainable way, the better. Residents warned against expecting rapid acceptance of the hub. If participation is going to build gradually, starting soon make sense.

#### **4) Use partners to deliver programs and reach participants.**

A hub is normally a location. It has limited capacity to produce programs. The most efficient way for a hub to get up and running is to recruit partners to run programs. The Wally Elmer hub already has a strong group of partners. These organizations offer excellent programs, some of which could be offered at Wally Elmer. The residents are familiar with them and with their staff, which will make the decision to participate in programs at Wally Elmer easier. Just as importantly, they have strong reputations in the community, and their participation will bring added support to the hub project.

Other organizations, including the local schools and churches, have expressed a willingness to join a partnership. These organizations engage a large proportion of the Rideau Heights community. Through pick-up, drop-off and notes sent home, schools reach hundreds of households daily. The Churches reach similar numbers weekly. Community programs reach families on an ongoing basis and recruit volunteers.

These organizations can deliver information about the hub, gather information about community needs and priorities and can identify emerging leaders who could be assets to the Community Services Committee at the hub. These organizations are critical to the success of the hub and should be seen not just as service providers, but also as conduits to the community and as valuable participants in the community development effort.

#### **5) Build the community development process by slowly diversifying the hub development process.**

The early emphasis on quick starts and quick wins should not obscure the fact that the objective of the effort is community development, which is a long term effort built around long term goals. The hub development process is designed to expand into a community development process and should proceed in ways that are compatible with that future role. The hub is a key step in the community development process, but a hub that does not increase the shared ability of people in the community to address the issues that affect them will have far less impact on the wellbeing of the community and will do less to improve individual outcomes.

People working on the hub development should be working with one eye on future opportunities. There are many examples of activities that could move the community toward that goal.

- Success in developing the hub over the first several months can be followed by other community activities outside the walls of Wally Elmer, like community gardens or community cleanups. These are positive activities that were raised during consultations that are not connected to a hub but are strongly supported.
- Active and visible “anti-crime” activities may be daunting for residents to engage in, but “community improvement” audits, that can identify where lighting should be improved or blind corners made safer, would meet some strongly felt local needs.
- Summer brings more activity in the park and more opportunities to engage. The continuation of the revived baseball league, community events like a BMX rally or an outdoor movie night could have a positive effect.
- Kingston & Frontenac Housing needs to address repair problems in Rideau Heights buildings. Linking residents with KFH staff to plan joint community improvements would enhance both efforts. New gardens, community murals or simple neighbourhood

cleanups could give tenants a role in making their neighbourhood better and give KFH an opportunity to partner with their tenants, raise the profile of the repairs they are doing and demonstrate that North Kingston is getting the attention it deserves.

These ongoing, expanding activities can guide a gradual evolution from hub development to community development as a natural progression.

But community development is not about building, programs or activities. It is about people. The hub programming, community activities and community improvements should be designed to engage new leadership. The creation of the governance structure at Wally Elmer is one tool for developing leadership. Participation as a volunteer in community programs is another. Leading a community garden group or a community cleanup provides similar opportunities. Each of these activities should be geared toward 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. Building a stronger pool of community leaders is the primary hurdle of community development. Once that hurdle is cleared, the process of expanding the hub governance process to a community development process is simply a shift of focus and an expansion of scope.

#### **6) Reach out and recruit using many small processes.**

Drawing out ideas and engaging new leaders requires considerable effort. Events at the hub and efforts to organize activities will draw in some active members of the community but a concerted outreach process will also be needed. Due to the fragmentation of the Rideau Heights community, any community development effort will need to use a wide variety of strategies that exploit different avenues of leadership recruitment to gather a leadership network large enough to succeed. The development of the hub provides an ideal opportunity to pursue many of those avenues.

One-time events at the hub will require volunteers: people who are willing to plan the event, help with decorating, manage the crafts table, monitor crowds, circulate flyers or sell raffle tickets. Recruiting for volunteers is one avenue for recruiting future leaders and volunteer recruitment should be a key part of every event. All promotional materials should provide information on how to volunteer, and outreach efforts should include a volunteer recruitment component.

Planning for the hub requires further community engagement. Community meetings should be one element of that. The Community meeting held on September 28<sup>th</sup> 2006 at Wally Elmer drew a sizable crowd and future meetings could have similar success.

Given the fragmentation of the Rideau Heights community, however, meetings are unlikely to be an effective tool for reaching the majority of residents. Several other organizing tools will be needed to reach the many segments of the Rideau Heights population:

*Porch talks:* An established communication method in Rideau Heights, talking to people on their porches worked well in this engagement effort and is likely to succeed in the future.

Conversations around the plans and programming for the Wally Elmer Centre were engaging for the people approached during development of this report: four of nine participants reached on porches expressed an interest in being involved in future discussion about the hub.

*Event interceptions:* Hosting large, one-off events not only helps people get involved in the Centre, it gathers them in a convenient location where they can be engaged in conversations. Advocates for the hub or for community development can use these opportunities to raise issues casually about the neighbourhood, about the hub and about the volunteer opportunities available. Getting people engaged, even in these casual and brief ways, opens up opportunities for a wider range of people to get active.

*Neighbourhood Circles:* Lawrence Community Works in Massachusetts reaches out to a highly mobile, highly fragmented population using “Neighborhood Circles”, which are dinner meetings hosted by a social network leader in the neighbourhood. The “host” invites 8-10 neighbours to dinners. At the dinner the participants discuss issues. Every Neighbourhood Circle has two dinners and everyone has to commit to attending both. By the second dinner, participants are past top-of-mind discussions and can dig deeper into the issues they care about, get motivated to act and help develop a plan. The cost of two dinners for ten people is usually less than the cost of staff time organizing and promoting a meeting, but with better results.

*Embedded discussions:* Rideau Heights has a small number of established regular gatherings such as Parent Council meetings at schools, Community Dinners at the Salvation Army, Church gatherings, the Red Hat Ladies and the North End Penguins. Groups like these should be asked to give one hour of their regular meeting time to look at the Wally Elmer Centre and offer their ideas. These opportunities continue to expand the consultation circle and give more and more people a stake in the development of the hub, but they also provide new opportunities for residents to get involved, as volunteers, leaders or supporters of the hub, and of the community.

*Community animation:* Community animation normally involves employing local residents with strong networks to be the front line of community outreach. However, Rideau Heights is a fragmented community with a maze of historic conflicts between groups. Hiring a member of one group risks running afoul of one of those conflicts and may be better avoided. Rideau Heights communications are heavily dependant on word of mouth and community networks. The participation of leaders in those networks is critical to successful communication. They will have to be approached and encouraged to participate actively, but their participation will have to be voluntary if the community development effort is to steer clear of unnecessary conflicts.

Outreach efforts should be specifically geared to reach across the major and minor dividing lines in the community. Outreach efforts should include homeowners in the north and south ends of Rideau Heights. They should assess participation from each street and block in the neighbourhood to ensure that different geographically based social networks are all having an opportunity to engage. They should compare participation with the demographic analysis of the community to ensure that cultural groups and age groups aren't underrepresented.

In addition to these outreach efforts, the development of a hub and the promotion of programs and events can be communicated through newsletters, posters, flyers and handouts. Partner institutions like schools and churches can promote projects more easily if they have a steady stream of written information to post or distribute. This kind of ongoing stream of information can help keep people informed but it should be used as much as possible to promote two-way communications as well. Newsletters and flyers should include fill-in forms to get comments, gather ideas or invite volunteers. Forms should include contact information to enable the hub

and people involved in community development to reach people with good ideas or thoughtful comments and get them more engaged.

## *Conclusion*

Rideau Heights is a low-income community with few services and fragmented social networks that has been cut off from much of the rest of Kingston and stigmatized for decades. Despite this Rideau Heights's strong sense of self reliance has withstood those challenges over the years. Rideau Heights retains a fierce community pride, but has developed a strong distrust of outside institutions.

The prospect of developing the Wally Elmer Centre as a neighbourhood hub has created an unprecedented opportunity to move away from the current, insular mood in Rideau Heights and pursue broad-based community development. There is enthusiastic support for this at the community level, but there are also profound doubts that it will ever receive the support it needs, and that the community will once again be disappointed.

This report documents the circumstances of the people who live in Rideau Heights, and enumerates their concerns and priorities in an effort to identify the best ways to capitalize on the current opportunity for community development. Our findings suggest a focused approach that builds on community strengths. This approach requires energy and commitment. It includes:

- Making a prompt decision to support a community hub at the Wally Elmer Centre;
- Supporting the gradual growth of the hub;
- Supporting and developing meaningful community leadership;
- Developing the hub in partnership with trusted local organizations and avoid an overly institutional approach;
- Developing the hub as a child-centered facility with programs for adults playing a secondary role;
- Focusing early programming on simple and accessible activities and community events;
- Supporting the development of the hub with strong community leadership as first steps in an evolution toward board-based and comprehensive community development; and
- Adopting a multi-pronged approach to community engagement on an ongoing basis.

This approach enables Rideau Heights to take advantage of the current opportunities because it is based on the needs and priorities of the neighbourhood, and built on the strengths and assets of the community.

## APPENDIX A: RIDEAU HEIGHTS MATRIX OF ASSETS/ISSUES/RESPONSES

Sources – See Table 1

*Issue/Response Matrix 1 – Issues, Strategies, Proposed Solutions and Response to Date*

Issue	Source	Solutions Proposed
Poor housing conditions, access to housing	CRNC Gang Forum Feb 2006, KCHC Strat Plan	
Poverty	“ “ “ KCHC Strat Plan	
Garbage/graffiti/appearance of the neighbourhood	“ “ “ HIP Survey	Increased housing staff presence Remove graffiti add murals and beautification of RH – (Community in Bloom etc.) “cleaner neighbourhood” – 19/43 HIP survey respondents
Safety - Lighting	“ “ “	
Safety – gangs; threatening behaviour; violence against property; drug dealing, use and needles; theft; graffiti	“ “ “	Neighbourhood Watch Gang prevention included in “Risk Watch Programs” Alternative to suspensions for youth Detox - improve confidentiality and access Street workers in the area
Safety – Insufficient police presence (9/43 survey respondents)	“ “ “	Auxiliary police presence; community policing model Link police and youth through schools
Safety - Unsupervised children	“ “ “	Mentoring programs by youth for younger children
Lack of programs and services for children and youth (18/43 survey respondents)	“ “ “	Counselling presence for children and youth Youth advisory groups After school programs Pathways- type initiative Engage youth in projects
Stigma	“ “ “	Positive public relations
Insufficient Park/ Recreational space and programs	“ “ “ KCHC Strat Plan	More programs like the athletic program at St. Patrick’s School (Donald Peterson) More sports; dances; skating Splash pad/Skateboard Park Benches/playgrounds/lighting Wally Elmer Hub Development More funding for community health and safety programs

		Have developers build parks/community facilities Develop Fire Lane for recreational use
Local Access to services and information about services	“ “ “	Wally Elmer Hub Development Link residents and services
Lack of opportunities for community gatherings/celebrations	“ “ “	
Access to stores and services		Stores in walking distance Bank Reroute train tracks to run parallel to 401 and develop waterfront by RH
Lack of access to specific health services, including dental Mental health services for adults and children	CRNC forum and KCHC Strat Plan	
Lack of neighbourhood organizing	KCHC Interim Report	Promote neighbourhood associations (CRNC, Fun and Friendly, HIP, NPCIA)

***Issue/Response Matrix 2 – Assets***

<b>Asset</b>	<b>Source</b>
Easy access to downtown	CRNC Gang Forum Feb 2006
Specific programs and services, including positive influence of recreational activities – sports	CRNC Gang Forum Feb 2006
Churches referred to as positive influence on children and families	CRNC Gang Forum Feb 2006
Parks 19/43	HIP survey respondents
Sense of community 32/43	HIP survey respondents
Access to schools 11/43 ( <i>meaning</i> )	HIP survey respondents
Police Sub-station and emergency services response	CRNC Gang Forum Feb 2006

## APPENDIX B: DESCRIPTION OF KEY INFORMANTS

NAME	ORGANIZATION
1. Amodeo, Chris	Former Secretary, JG Simcoe PS
2. Bell, Christine	Kingston CHC
3. Boyce, Jim	Intermediate Grade Teacher, Rideau Heights Elementary School
4. Buck, Leonor	Youth Worker, Holy Family School
5. Coffin, Alicia	Assistant Executive Director and Manager of Volunteer Services, Boys and Girls Club of Kingston
6. Cutherson, Jim	Worthington Park Resident
7. Dahm, Amy	Former Teacher, Rideau Heights School
8. Fairley, Tanis	Former Principal, Rideau Heights PS
9. Lisa Finateri	Executive Director, John Howard Society of Kingston and District
10. Gargaro, Tony	Director of Community Relations, Boys and Girls Club of Kingston
11. Gordanier, Colleen	Rideau Heights Resident
12. Gordanier, Jim	Rideau Heights Resident
13. Halleran, Donna	Former Teacher for 16 years, JG Simcoe PS
14. Hamilton, Debbie	Rideau Heights Resident; Bingo Hall Clerk
15. Hannah, Annette	Rideau Heights Resident - Single mother
16. Hannah, Carol Anne	Rideau Heights Resident - Elderly
17. Kadonaga, Capitan Randy	Salvation Army
18. Loveys, James	Youth Member, Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns
19. Mabblerly, Helen	Better Beginnings
20. MacGillvary, Judy	Minister, St. Matthew's United Church
21. McBride, Chris	Outreach Worker, Street Health
22. Meers, Sara	Councillor, City of Kingston
23. Millz	Rideau Heights Resident - Afro-Canadian youth
24. Moore, Rose	Former Rideau Heights Resident; Street Health Staff
25. Moss, Gillian	Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC)
26. Neumann, Donna	Attendance Officer; Former Adolescent Care Worker, QECVI
27. Parsons, Harold	Executive Director, Boys and Girls Club of Kingston
28. Radway, Elaine	Kingston CHC
29. Riddell, Cindy	Rideau Heights Resident - Single mother
30. Ritchie, Nancy	Business Manager, Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre
31. Shewell, Mitchell	Director of Aboriginal Health and Wellness Program, Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre
32. [Name withheld on request]	Rideau Heights Resident – Afro-Canadian male youth, age 20
33. [Name withheld on request]	Rideau Heights Resident – White female youth, age 17
34. [Name withheld on request]	Biker; Rideau Heights Resident – White middle-age male
35. [Name withheld on request]	Biker; Rideau Heights Resident – First Nations middle-age male
36. [Name withheld on request]	Biker; Rideau Heights Resident – Caribbean middle-age male

## APPENDIX C: RIDEAU HEIGHTS INTERVIEW Q&A

The City of Kingston has shifted programs out of Wally Elmer, but a lot of people think that the Centre could be used as a base to make good things happen in Rideau Heights.

Wally Elmer could be used as a community centre, or what is described as a community hub. A community hub can offer services, recreation programs, community meeting space, which are all in the building. Further, a hub can also be a home base for programs, services and activities that happen across the neighbourhood from community gardens, to youth outreach, to community supports.

Making the Wally Elmer Centre work as a hub means understanding what residents want for their community. We are working with a Steering Committee of service providers, city staff and residents to understand the community's vision for Rideau Heights and the Wally Elmer Centre. We were asked to lend a hand because we have helped other communities develop a vision and turn their ideas into reality.

Your input will help the steering committee to work hand in hand with residents to make Wally Elmer Centre into the place that the people of Rideau Heights want. Any reports, ideas or proposals that come from these interviews will be brought back to the community for discussion before anything goes ahead.

If you have about 30 minutes, I'd like to ask some questions about your community.

### Questions:

1. When we talk about Rideau Heights, can you tell me what area you think of? What are the boundaries?
2. Tell me about Rideau Heights – what kind of neighbourhood is it, and how would you describe the various groups of people who live in your community?
3. What are Rideau Height's strengths and assets?  
*What works well here? What makes it feel like home?*
4. In your opinion what are the particular challenges you think this area faces?  
*Who in particular are facing challenges/ not doing well? Which groups are struggling?*
  - i. Can you say more about the types of challenges they are facing?
  - ii. Are there places where you do not feel safe? Where you would not walk?
5. How long have you been involved in the neighbourhood? How has the neighbourhood changed over the years?  
*Were there any particular events or developments that had an impact on that change?*
6. Do you think that Rideau Heights is a neighbourhood that would benefit from developing a community centre or a community hub as I described it (*recap*)?

7. What are some of the things that you would like to see happen out of the hub?
  - i. What kinds of programs/ services/ opportunities for children, youth, adults, seniors, families would you like to see in this neighbourhood? What other kinds of things do you think would help build a stronger, safer neighbourhood?*
8. What barriers might prevent a hub from working? Who would not want to participate? Why? Do you have any ideas about the best way to connect with them?
9. From outside Rideau Heights looks like many other neighbourhoods, but every community has its own groups and unique features. There are always things that bring some people together and separates them from others. How would you describe the makeup of the Rideau Heights neighbourhood?
  - i. What kinds of groups make up the community?*
  - ii. How do the various groups relate to each other?*
  - iii. Who gets on well? Who doesn't talk to each other?*
10. How do people in the community connect with each other/support each other? (e.g. faith, cultural events etc.)
11. Do you have any advice for us about how we reach people and talk to them?
  - i. Where do people gather/ engage/ talk together?*
  - ii. Are there things we should know about that might make it difficult to bring people together? (Travel, conflicts, history of organizing).*
12. Who else do you think we should talk to in the neighbourhood? Are there particular people who speak for the community or for their particular part of it? Are there key organizations and agencies? Are there shopkeepers or businesses that you think might be interested in what happens to the neighbourhood?
13. Any other thoughts, suggestions or questions?