

Building Strong Neighbourhoods

Closing gaps and creating opportunities in Toronto's inner suburbs



United Way
Toronto



Poverty is increasingly concentrated in Toronto's inner suburbs.



United Way's Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy works to improve conditions in these communities.

Major milestones since 2005:

\$209M

United Way has invested \$209M across Toronto's inner suburbs.

155

155 new community groups have been established through Action for Neighbourhood Change in the 13 priority neighbourhoods.

230

230 United Way programs and services are now available to residents in Toronto's inner suburbs.

Our neighbourhoods at risk:

a call to action



United Way
Toronto

In 2005 a group of community leaders came together to tackle a serious threat to our city: the decline of Toronto's neighbourhoods.

The Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force was spurred into action by United Way research that revealed alarming realities about life in this city. It showed the number of high-poverty neighbourhoods in Toronto was growing at a shocking pace. Poor families were increasingly living in poor neighbourhoods, concentrated in the inner suburban communities that surround the downtown core.

Poverty was just one of the inter-connected challenges facing residents in these neighbourhoods. People who wanted to improve their community often lacked the tools and support they needed. There were too few places where residents could come together. And many neighbourhoods with the highest levels of concentrated poverty had the least number of programs and services to help people build a better life.

The Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force issued a call to action: to ensure that no one in our city is disadvantaged because of where they live.

Neighbourhoods matter. They are the foundation of a strong, vibrant community. The health and vitality of our entire city is put at risk as long as any neighbourhoods in Toronto are falling behind.

“ Only when economic opportunity is extended to every neighbourhood is the overall potential of our city achievable. Through strategic investments, United Way funded programs and services across the city are helping connect people with jobs — and promoting greater prosperity, creating a community in which we can all take pride. ”

- Bill Downe, President and Chief Executive Officer,
BMO Financial Group



Our response:

United Way's Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy

Since 2005 United Way has committed to doing our part to improve neighbourhood conditions, like increasing access to community services and supporting resident engagement. We have also dedicated ourselves to advocating for systemic change and policy solutions to reverse growing poverty in our city.

From the beginning we understood this would require a long-term commitment — that neighbourhood change would be gradual and progress would take time. But we also knew that we had a responsibility to act.

So how does a charity with a long history of meeting immediate needs begin to revitalize neighbourhoods? By leveraging our strengths: strong relationships with community agencies and local leaders; a committed base of generous donors; and an ability to bring together partners across different sectors to achieve shared goals.

Drawing on these assets, United Way set out to achieve three main goals through our Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy:

1 Focus efforts where they're needed most

Investment and partnerships

2 Support neighbourhood change from within

Action for Neighbourhood Change and Resident Action Grants

3 Improve access to community supports

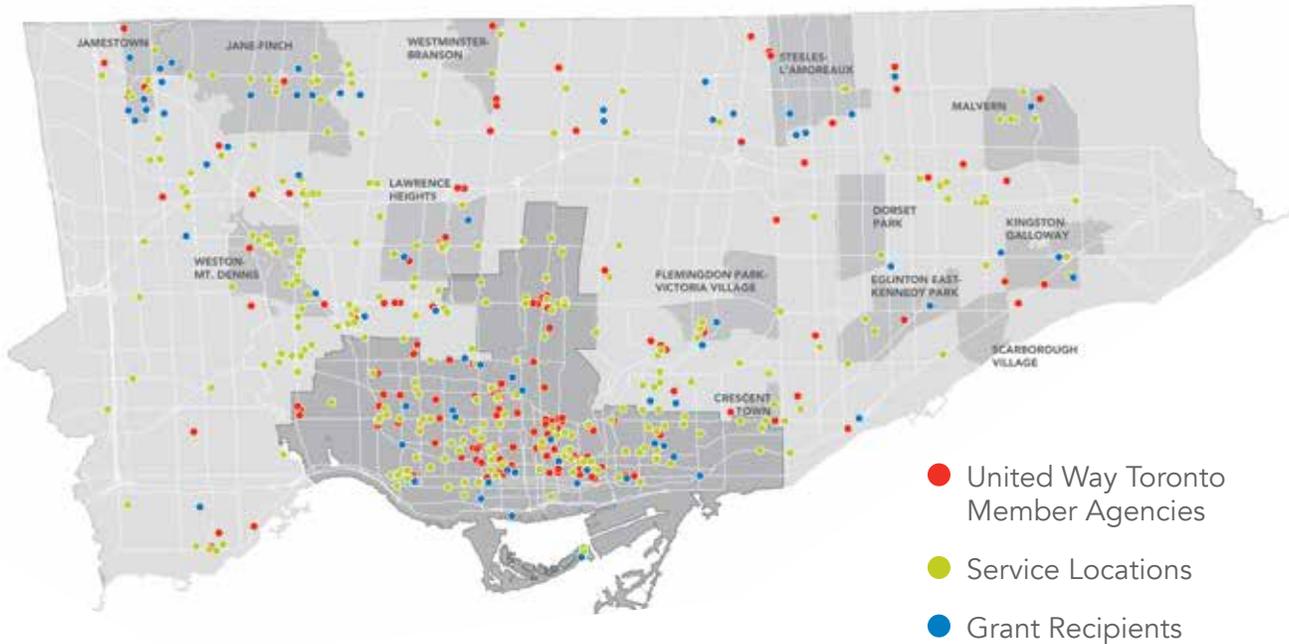
Community Hubs

We targeted 13 priority neighbourhoods based on criteria that revealed where there was inadequate community infrastructure, growing neighbourhood poverty and, in some cases, elevated levels of crime.

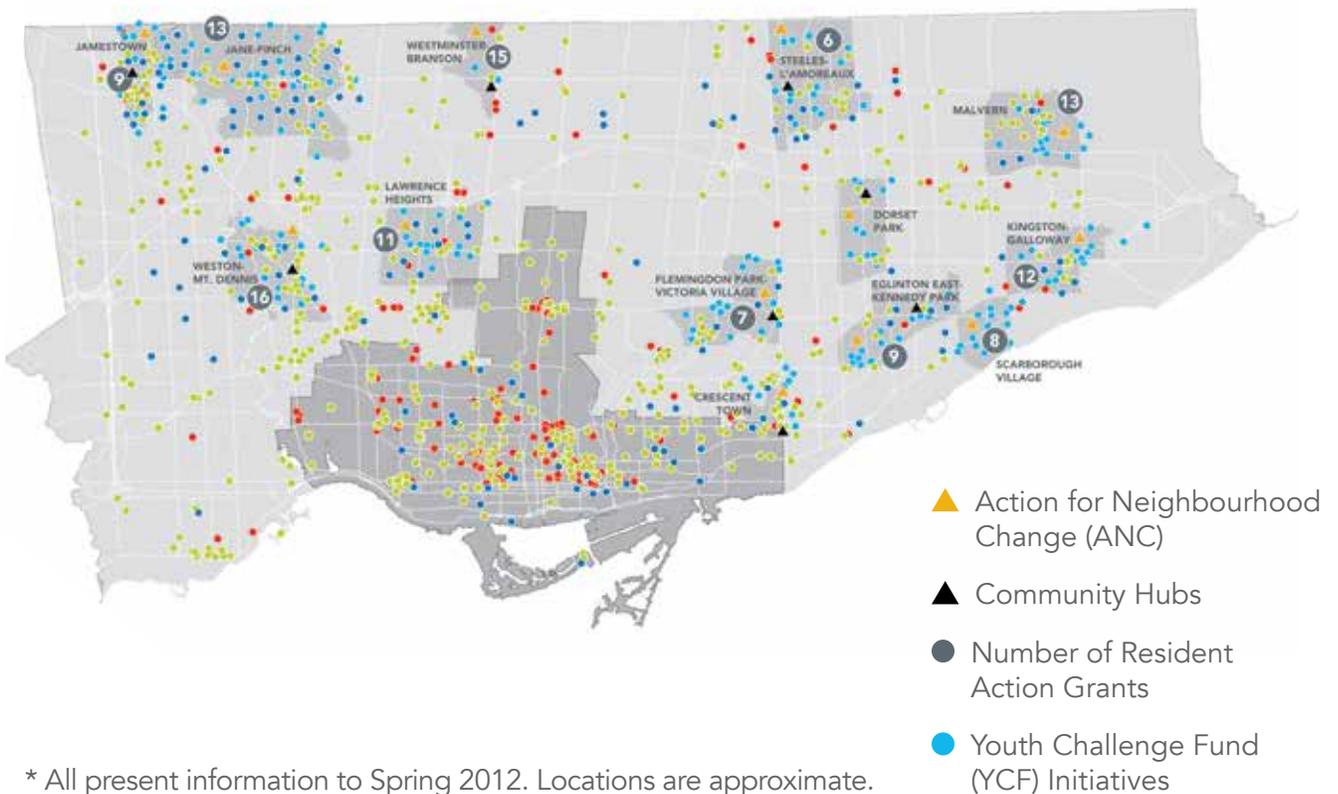
Closing service gaps across Toronto

■ Inner Suburbs ■ Priority Neighbourhoods ■ Downtown Core

2005



Present



* All present information to Spring 2012. Locations are approximate.

Investing in neighbourhood change today and tomorrow

Bill Hatanaka grew up in Dorset Park and understands the challenges facing inner suburban neighbourhoods today. That's why he and his wife Jan are so motivated to invest their charitable giving in United Way's Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy. As donors to both a Community Hub and Resident Action Grants, they're strengthening neighbourhoods from the ground up. "It just makes sense," Bill says. "It gets money to the right people in a sustainable way."

1



◀ The Hatanakas are investing in neighbourhoods today for a stronger city tomorrow.

3

United Way has influenced 3 key pieces of legislation aimed at reducing economic vulnerability: improving employment standards, regulating payday lending and a Poverty Reduction Act.

Focusing efforts where they're needed most

Investing in communities at risk of falling behind is a strategy that's built on common sense: put your efforts where they're needed most and will have the greatest impact.

Because we know that no one organization alone can solve our city's shared problems, United Way builds partnerships with others to adopt this kind of place-based approach as well.

But improving social conditions in specific neighbourhoods is only part of the solution. We need to address the reasons why people are living in poverty — and why their numbers are growing. That's why United

Way champions policy solutions aimed at reducing poverty and restoring mixed-income neighbourhoods in Toronto.

Our efforts to improve access to social services and strengthen resident leadership will only be successful in the long-term if governments at all levels address the underlying conditions that leave people vulnerable in the first place.

Ultimately, our goal is to close the gaps between the neighbourhoods in our city that are doing well and those that are falling behind.

“United Way Toronto is a leading champion for stronger communities and a proven change-agent in tackling complex problems through a neighbourhood lens. United Way is a valuable partner of the Ontario government in our drive to extend opportunity for all, including our partnerships on the Youth Challenge Fund, Community Hubs and our Poverty Reduction Strategy.”

– Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario

What we've accomplished so far

United Way's efforts to strengthen neighbourhoods began with our own funding. Since 2005 we have invested \$209-million across Toronto's inner suburbs.

Our generous donors have supported United Way member agencies, funded activities like resident engagement and built essential community infrastructure.

We have worked with our member agencies to expand programming across the inner suburbs. The result: nearly half of all United Way-funded programs and services are being offered to residents in areas that lacked access to these vital supports.

The City of Toronto has a complementary strategy that focuses on neighbourhood revitalization. Others have adopted our targeted approach as well. Both the federal and provincial governments have invested in programs and infrastructure to strengthen under-served communities. And the Government of Ontario has adopted a neighbourhoods approach in its Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Focusing on priority neighbourhoods was a key recommendation in the Roots of Youth Violence Review report that came out of the Summer of the Gun. The Youth Challenge Fund — a United Way partnership with community and the Government of Ontario — has provided young people in these neighbourhoods with positive choices.

10K More than 10,000 young people in priority neighbourhoods have been engaged through the Youth Challenge Fund, playing leadership roles in initiatives, finding employment, learning new skills and receiving academic supports.

Major Milestones in Focusing Efforts Where They're Needed Most

 **\$209M**

United Way has invested \$209M across Toronto's inner suburbs since 2005.

 **46%**

46% of new funding for member agencies in the inner suburbs has been targeted at priority neighbourhoods since 2005.

 **\$39M**

Since 2005 United Way has invested \$39M in the 13 priority neighbourhoods for initiatives like resident engagement, local programming and infrastructure.



“ Ontario is at the crossroads with regards to youth development. The place-based approach of United Way Toronto and its local partners has been powerfully transformative. ”

– Hon. Roy McMurtry
Former Attorney-General & Chief
Justice of Ontario; Co-Author of the
Roots of Youth Violence Review report

💰 \$4.77

For every \$1 invested by United Way in priority neighbourhood initiatives, an additional \$4.77 has been invested by the City of Toronto, provincial and federal governments and community partners.

👤 230

230 United Way programs and services are now available to residents in Toronto’s inner suburbs.

👤 111

Since 2005, 111 Youth Challenge Fund initiatives have provided young people in priority neighbourhoods with positive options.

Helping residents find their voice and their power to create change

Christina Fernandes joined Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) in Bathurst-Finch because she was concerned about neighbourhood safety: too many cars were speeding through a local intersection. Christina and her neighbours decided to take action. They met with the City of Toronto and successfully appealed for a stop sign to be installed. "Now, when problems come up in this neighbourhood, we know how to fix them," she says.

2

With the support of United Way, ▶
Christina Fernandes is taking action
to improve her neighbourhood.



155

Through Action for Neighbourhood Change, 155 new community groups have been established in the 13 priority neighbourhoods since 2005.

Supporting neighbourhood change from within

For neighbourhood change to be effective and sustainable it has to start with the people who live there.

Residents understand their communities and know best what's needed to revitalize them. They need to be in the driver's seat.

But in many of Toronto's priority neighbourhoods, the social networks, resident associations and other groups that enable people to play a meaningful role in community planning have not always existed.

Large newcomer communities from diverse backgrounds mean that local residents don't

speak the same language. Neighbourhoods often lack the physical space where communities can come together. And even when connections are formed, residents haven't necessarily had the support they need to tackle community issues.

Across the priority neighbourhoods, United Way is addressing these barriers to community action. In partnership with local agencies, we are helping residents build the capacity and gain the skills, knowledge and confidence through which they can make — and deliver — plans for improving their community.

“Tough economic times have been especially harsh on families already struggling to make ends meet. United Way has been crucial in shining a light on the challenges that are facing many parts of our city, taking action to connect and support residents, while bringing investments to areas that need it most.”

- John Cartwright
President, Toronto and York Region Labour Council

What we've accomplished so far

Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) is the foundation of United Way's efforts to engage local residents and support their capacity for community revitalization.

ANC initiatives have been established in all 13 priority neighbourhoods. To date more than 675 residents have participated in capacity-building workshops, helping draw out existing knowledge and expertise and to build skills in new areas.

A Resident Action Plan has been developed in each neighbourhood to identify local priorities and guide community action. These are now the foundation of community planning in priority neighbourhoods. Resident Action Grants totaling more than

\$670,000 funded 132 local projects and neighbourhood improvements identified by community members

United Way's Resident Action Grants are a unique tool for supporting resident-identified priorities. They are the only grants directly available to people in priority neighbourhoods. The investments — managed by residents themselves — have funded a variety of projects and initiatives: playgrounds for local kids; community gardens and kitchens that promote healthy living; and recreational and cultural activities for everyone from youth to seniors.

19.3%

Reported incidents of crime have fallen 19.3% across all priority neighbourhoods since 2005.

Major Milestones in Supporting Neighbourhood Change from Within

 **\$10.5M**

\$10.5M has been invested by United Way to engage residents through Action for Neighbourhood Change. \$3.5M more was leveraged from other partners.

 **440**

440 community festivals and events brought people together in priority neighbourhoods since 2005.

 **3,200**

More than 3,200 people living in priority neighbourhoods have made their voices heard through resident surveys conducted by local Action for Neighbourhood Change initiatives.





“ Crime is down across the city, but that’s not all due to great police work. My officers tell me that United Way’s neighbourhood investments and efforts to empower residents are helping make our city safer. ”

– Bill Blair
Chief, Toronto Police Service

 38

Residents have completed 38 safety audits, with the goal of reducing crime and improving everyone’s personal safety.

 76K

17 new community gardens have provided residents with 76,000 square feet for fresh fruit and vegetables.

 26 Tons

Residents have cleaned up more than 26 tons of garbage in priority neighbourhoods through 46 clean-up events.

Finding community at the Victoria Park Hub

Rajaa Hanna first came to the Victoria Park Hub seeking support for her intellectually disabled brother. But she ended up finding far more: she found a community. Today her children and mother are also accessing programs. As more residents discover the Hub, it's clear that a new community is taking shape in Victoria Village — one that has the services and supports families need.



◀ Rajaa (top left) and her family are taking advantage of many services at their local Community Hub.

4X

United Way donors invested \$6.7M to build Community Hubs, leveraging over four times more from governments and other funders.

Improving access to community supports

Living in a neighbourhood that suffers from a high concentration of poverty can be challenging. But it's even harder when you can't easily access vital health and social services.

In many of Toronto's highest-poverty neighbourhoods there has been a serious lack of infrastructure. Poor access to services puts the wellbeing of residents at risk. It means people don't have the opportunities they need to build a better life.

Across Toronto's inner suburbs, United Way is working to expand social services and community programming, improving access to fundamental supports like employment counselling and settlement services.

And in those neighbourhoods that have had the most severe lack of supports, we're partnering with others to build new community infrastructure.

We're also building amenities like community kitchens and meeting rooms, tackling the challenge of limited space where residents can come together and develop connections.

Our goal is to ensure residents in the inner suburbs have access to the same quality of services and infrastructure as those living downtown.

“ At the Ontario Trillium Foundation we know that access to local services and programs significantly improves the quality of life for everyone in a community. United Way's Building Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, and the connections and networks it helps build, is transforming communities across the city. ”

– Andrea Cohen, CEO, Ontario Trillium Foundation

What we've accomplished so far

Since 2005 we've made great progress in expanding services and building infrastructure in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods.

By the end of 2012 seven Community Hubs — central locations with multiple services under one roof — will be open to serve residents where need is greatest. An eighth Hub is in development.

Hubs are a permanent home to more than 50 social service agencies — and a space for many more to provide locally-specific programs and services.

Another important success of Community Hubs is access to new community space for use by local resident groups — something that was seriously lacking in many priority neighbourhoods.

The impact of these efforts will continue to be felt well into the future, as new programs and supports expand into the most under-served neighbourhoods in our city.

145

By coming together through Community Hubs, agencies have developed 145 new collaborations to meet local needs in innovative ways.

Major Milestones in Improving Access to Community Supports

 8

8 new Community Hubs have been constructed or are currently in development in Toronto's most under-served priority neighbourhoods.

 168K

More than 168,000 square feet of new multiservice infrastructure has been built, including over 27,000 square feet of new community space.

 54

Community Hubs are a permanent home to 54 social service agencies. Many more use the space to provide locally-specific programs and services.

the Hub



“Community Hubs are a very concrete way that families can access a range of services. The unique collaboration between different community agencies and service providers puts residents first and is what makes this model truly unique.”

– Axelle Janczur, Executive Director, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services

In Community Hubs that have been open for at least a year:

 **63K**

Hub services and programs have been used over 63,000 times.

 **19K**

More than 19,000 residents have used new community space and amenities like community kitchens.

 **700**

700 local residents have participated in Hub planning, operations, program delivery or evaluation.

The future of Toronto's neighbourhoods

Together, we've accomplished a great deal through our efforts to build stronger neighbourhoods. But our work isn't done.

Poverty continues to be a threat. And United Way's research shows a focus is needed on the high rise rental towers that house more than half a million Torontonians.

These trends underscore the need for United Way to move forward with a long-term commitment to our city's inner suburbs and to continue targeting priority neighbourhoods.

We're on the right path.

As we move forward we will work closely with partners like the City of Toronto, which has renewed its commitment to strengthening neighbourhoods, as well as the provincial and federal governments. We will continue to engage other partners in this important work.

We must build on the lessons we've learned from our shared successes — and extend our efforts to begin revitalizing tower communities.

In 2005 United Way set an ambitious goal: to strengthen those neighbourhoods most impacted by long-term social and economic trends.

This kind of community change takes time. But we're making a difference.

We have laid a foundation to help close the gaps, so that no one in Toronto is disadvantaged by where they live.

It's a solid foundation — and one that we must continue to build on.

“As Mayor I have been committed to ensuring that all residents enjoy the same opportunities. Through partnership and collaboration, United Way's efforts are helping create the city we all want to see.”

- Rob Ford, Mayor of Toronto

Action for Neighbourhood Change and Community Hubs Lead Partners

- Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
- Agincourt Community Services Association
- Albion Neighbourhood Services
- Community MicroSkills Development Centre
- East Scarborough Storefront
- Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre
- Malvern Family Resource Centre
- Neighbourhood Link Support Services
- North York Community House
- Rexdale Community Health Centre
- Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities
- Social Planning Toronto
- Unison Health and Community Services
- Working Women Community Centre
- YouthLink

Government Partners

- City of Toronto
- Government of Ontario
- Government of Canada

United Way Donors to ANC, Community Hubs and YCF (\$10,000+)

- William & Lorna Anderson
- Bluma Appel Community Trust
- Harleen K. Bains
- The E. W. Bickle Foundation
- BMO Financial Group
- Brookfield Asset Management
- Cadillac Fairview
- Calloway REIT
- Kirby Chown
- Peter & Catherine Clark
- Michael Clemons
- Tami & George Cope
- Bob & Gayle Cronin
- Teri & Bill Currie
- Dominic & Pearl D'Alessandro
- Bill & Robin Downe
- Robert & Ellen Eisenberg
- Enbridge Gas Distribution
- Goldie Feldman
- First Capital Realty
- The Flatt Foundation
- Foresters
- Galin Foundation
- Barry & Laurie Green
- David Y. Green & Daphne Wagner & Lita & Mike
- Fairfax Financial
- The Minto Foundation
- Robert Harding
- Jan & Bill Hatanaka
- The Haynes - Connell Foundation at the Toronto Community Foundation
- The Honderich Family
- Martine M. Irman
- Jays Care Foundation
- Donald K. Johnson & Anna McCowan-Johnson
- Sarah B. Kavanagh
- W.C. Kitchen Family Foundation
- George J. Kostman
- The Albert & Temmy Latner Family Foundation
- The Leafs Fund for Kids
- Bill MacKinnon
- T. R. Meighen Family Foundation
- Andrew Phillips & Cathy Houston
- Polar Foundation
- Frances & Tim Price
- Procter & Gamble Inc.
- Raptors Foundation for Kids
- RBC Capital Markets Employees
- RBC Foundation
- Retrocom Mid-Market REIT
- Rogers Communications Inc.
- Heather Schoeler
- The S. Schulich Foundation
- Susan & John Schumacher
- Scotiabank
- Dori Segal
- Francesca Shaw
- Allan Slaight & Emmanuelle Gattuso-Slaight
- The Slaight Family Foundation
- SmartCentres
- Edward Sonshine
- The Estate of Helen Stacey
- TD Bank Group
- The Conservatory Group
- James M. Tory
- Whitecastle Investments / The Diamond Family
- Beth & Brent Wilson
- Red & Brenda Wilson
- Jennifer S. Witzel
- Linda Young

“ANC has given me and other residents in Lotherton a sense of inclusion and pride within our neighbourhood. It has fostered leadership and mentorship opportunities to build and strengthen our community.”

- Joel Persaud, Lotherton resident



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