

MEETING OF THE NEIGHBOURHOODS CURA RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING #1, 30 MARCH 2005

University of Toronto Faculty Club

PRESENT:

David Hulchanski, CUCS UofT
Maureen Fair, St. Christopher House (SCH)
Susan Pigott, SCH
Usha George, FSW UofT & CERIS Toronto
Philippa Campsie, CUCS, UofT
Miia Suokonautio, SCH & FSW UofT
Izumi Sakamoto, FSW UofT
Shaun Conway, SCH
Harvey Low, City of Toronto
Don Embuldeniya, United Way
Richard Maaranen, CUCS UofT
Daniel Schugurensky, OISE UofT

Joe Harmer, Criminology UofT
Hugh Lawson, Toronto Community
Housing Corporation
Bob Murdie, Geography, York U. & CERIS
Sylvia Novac, CUCS UofT
Rob Howarth, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres
Rick Eagan, SCH
Jennifer Woodell, SCH
Alan Walks, Geography UofT
Reed Henry, Artscape
Larry Bourne, Geography/Planning UofT

ORIGIN OF THE CURA

Maureen Fair described the origin of the CURA. St. Christopher House conducts regular “community sweeps,” during which volunteers knock on doors in the catchment area and ask people about their needs and concerns. Recently, the volunteers have noticed changes in the area – fewer tenants, more homeowners, fewer immigrant families, more white middle-class families. Housing prices are rising. Representatives of St. Christopher House approach Michael Shapcott and David Hulchanski at the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, and the idea for a research project that might lead to useful policy relating to gentrification was born.

RULES OF SSHRC GRANT

UofT and SCH have received a grant, which gives them flexibility in how the money is spent, within certain guidelines. It cannot be used to pay professors but it can be used to hire students and community workers. Although the budget suggests expenditure of \$200,000 in each of five years, the project participants may spend more or less than that amount in any one year, provided that they do not exceed the \$1 million total overall. For example, conferences planned for Year 2 and Year 5 may mean higher expenditures in those years.

Project finances (paying the bills) will be managed through the university, and the project already has \$400,000 in its university account. Over the five years, 20% of the budget or \$200,000 will be used to communicate and disseminate the findings in many different forms to a wide range of audiences (and in all appropriate languages)

STEERING COMMITTEE

There are 8 people on the steering committee: 4 from UofT, 4 from SCH. The UofT members are David Hulchanski, Larry Bourne, Daniel Schugurensky, and Jason Hackworth. The SCH members are Maureen Fair, Susan Pigott, Rick Eagan and SCH Board member Anne Hertz. Minutes will be available to all (and posted on the CURA website once they are approved).

WORKING GROUPS

The four working groups will include community members. A few people have already come forward and volunteered to participate. Within each working group, there may be a variety of research projects, large and small. These groups will report regularly to the Research Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee. There will also be “town hall” meetings to present findings to members and the community and solicit their feedback. Information will also be available on the CURA website.

CUCS SUPPORT

Sylvia Novac will do research coordination, as she does for other CUCS projects. Richard Maaranen has recently been hired as a data coordinator and analyst, and will work out of a CUCS office. Philippa Campsie of CUCS is available to help with publications and communications.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND GOALS

Daniel Schugurensky asked what practical outcomes people wanted to see in five years’ time. Maureen Fair suggested using indicators of gentrification, and tracking them over the course of the project. Susan Pigott noted that recently, community meetings over matters such as homelessness and group homes have become more polarized, and she hopes that in five years’ time the community will be more cohesive.

David Hulchanski suggested that the work would include comparisons with other neighbourhoods, such as Jane/Finch or Cabbagetown, to highlight contrasts in trends.

Usha George suggested a longitudinal study that will follow the community over the five years and track changes, which would mean starting to track certain indicators immediately. Daniel Schugurensky suggested this could include tracking age cohorts (such as a group of people who are now 18 and will be 23 in five years’ time).

Hugh Lawson noted that the project is not just to collect data, but to develop policy. The data should be used to make a case to government or community agencies about needs and services.

Reed Henry mentioned that Infrastructure Canada is actively seeking out ideas for investment. He added that it was important to come up with ideas that could be used in other communities, not just the SCH catchment area.

SEVEN PROPOSED PROJECTS

The group discussed the six projects that have been proposed so far and then added a seventh (see attached list). Each is still being developed, and a principal investigator needs to be identified for each one. Alan Walks suggested including an inventory of available services in the area, not just economic resources. Susan Pigott also suggested asset mapping, similar to the work done by the United Way, which would include determining how well services are being used. After some discussion, it was decided that this would be project #7. Rob Howarth agreed to prepare a brief proposal.

Daniel Schugurensky suggested preparing a paper that provides an overview of what is known about the community. David Hulchanski suggested that this would probably be done once results from the first few projects start to come in, perhaps in the form of a “State of the Neighbourhood” report.

Hugh Lawson suggested that a policy history of policies that have affected the neighbourhood would be useful. Although the federal and provincial policy effects have been documented (changes to EI, changes to social assistance, housing policies, etc.), less is known about the effects of changes in municipal policies, from schools to garbage pick-up. Richard Eagan also mentioned the need to do forecasting.

Susan Pigott mentioned the importance of identifying opportunities to intervene, for example, in the siting of social housing.

Daniel Schugurensky asked about making connections with local councillors, MPPs and MPs (there are three of each in the catchment area). It was noted that they have been invited to the community launch on June 6, 2005. They could also be invited to the April 13 event. The mayor and deputy mayor are aware of the project and Sean Goetz-Gadon can act as liaison.

Harvey Low mentioned the City’s neighbourhood profiles (http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/demographics/neighbourhood_profiles.htm). Public health is also doing health profiles of certain areas. Daniel Schugurensky suggested getting information from local schools as well.

Reed Henry and Bob Murdie suggested a walking tour of the area for all participants. Shaun Conway suggested that community members should be involved – they can point out concerns and opportunities for action.

Richard Eagan noted that the next SCH Community Sweep will be conducted on May 28 and June 1. Project participants might like to take part in that.

Susan Pigott mentioned the need to disaggregate neighbourhood groups, particularly those who oppose the establishment of new social service agencies. They do not all have the same reasons for objecting, so they shouldn't be lumped together.

Daniel Schugurensky suggested that the group might benefit from a paper that outlined the major issues of gentrification. David Hulchanski suggested that David Ley or Ray Forrest might be able to do this. He added that Eric Miller, a professor of transportation engineering at UofT may also be able to provide information from the very detailed Transportation Tomorrow Survey that would enrich the data available on the community.

In future, the Research Advisory Committee will review new research proposals as they come in from faculty members, students, SCH staff, or community members.

At present, there are some papers on the CURA website that provide background information on the community. These will be prepared for publication as part of the CURA project.

CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH LETTER OF INTENT

CUCS is currently exploring related research funding through the Canadian Institutes of Health. This proposal will depend on SCH capacity for additional research. If CUCS decides not to participate, or if another group wins a grant for community health promotion, there may be an opportunity to partner with other researchers on public health.

NEXT MEETING: JUNE 6, 2005

The Research Advisory Committee will meet on Monday, June 6. At this meeting, some of the researchers from elsewhere may be able to attend. These include David Ley (UBC), Damaris Rose (INRS, Montreal), Ray Forrest and Tom Slater (Centre for Neighbourhood Research, Bristol), and Janet L. Smith (Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement, U of Illinois, Chicago). The following meeting will be in September 2005.

YEAR 2 CONFERENCE: MAY 2006

Blair Badcock (Housing New Zealand Corporation) will be in Toronto in May 2006, and the project organizers hope to hold a conference at the same time.

Daniel Schugurensky mentioned that at the end of May 2006 the Congress of Social Sciences and Humanities will hold its annual conference in Toronto. This means that many academics

working on related topics will be in Toronto, and the CURA project could organize some activity to share ideas with some of them, either at the congress or in a parallel event. This could be a good way to exchange ideas with colleagues from other parts of Canada.

RELATED EVENTS

Harvey Low mentioned a conference on homelessness in May 2005, and Sylvia Novac suggested putting together a poster presentation to publicize the project there. Susan Pigott suggested that members of the committee circulate information about other conferences of interest at which CURA researchers could present results and get feedback on their progress.

STAYING IN TOUCH

The CURA website (www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/cura) will be kept up to date. Members of the Research Advisory Committee will also be kept up-to-date through e-mail bulletins from time to time. Any member who has an idea or suggestion is encouraged to send it to David Hulchanski, Maureen Fair, or Sylvia Novac.

Year 1 Proposed Research Projects – For Discussion

Year 1 Initiatives. \$200,000 budget. Four key research theme areas from the proposal.

**RESEARCH THEME 1:
NEIGHBOURHOOD ISSUES AND TRENDS WORKING GROUP**

- PROJECT #1: Comprehensive Neighbourhood Profile and Trends: What was, what is, what might be (projection of trends), from existing secondary sources**
- PROJECT #2: Neighbourhood Issues: Community Concerns, Attitudes, Needs**
- PROJECT #3: Community Development: University / Community Educational Exchange (CD forums, seminars, experiential learning)**
- PROJECT #4: Current Policies and Practices in Response to Gentrification and Displacement: Who is doing what? Making connections and gathering Ideas.**

**RESEARCH THEME 2:
HOUSING ISSUES AND TRENDS WORKING GROUP**

- PROJECT #5: Housing and Homelessness in the CURA Study Area: An Initial review of what is known, what the key issues are in each neighbourhood, and what requires further research**

**RESEARCH THEME 3:
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC & PHYSICAL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE WORKING GROUP**

- PROJECT #6: The Local Social Economy in the Study Area**
- PROJECT #7: Social Infrastructure and Neighbourhood Change**

**RESEARCH THEME 4:
LIFE TRANSITIONS AND AGING WORKING GROUP**
