

CREATION OF TORONTO “NEIGHBOURHOOD” BOUNDARIES

The neighbourhood boundaries were developed by the City¹ to help government and community agencies with their local planning, by providing socio-economic data at a meaningful geographic area. At the time (year 2000) no boundaries existed to analyse data at the neighbourhood level. The only alternative was to use Statistics Canada Census Tracts. This proved problematic not in the way Census Tracts are defined, but in the many different ways of aggregation up to a “neighbourhood level”.

The approach was therefore, to come to consensus as to the most appropriate way of aggregating census tracts as the building blocks. Three major assumptions were used before the process began: 1) Census Tracts are the most appropriate building block to use given the availability of data over time; 2) that income is the key variable that determines a neighbourhoods; and 3) that the boundaries must not conform to any existing service or political boundaries (unless they fit the criteria set out below), as these are biased and not statistically meaningful in use for demography and social planning purposes.

Not all people define "neighbourhoods" the same way. For the purposes of planning and statistical reporting however, these neighbourhoods were defined based on [Statistics Canada](#) census tracts. Census tracts include several city blocks and have on average about 4,000 people. Most service agencies have service areas that are defined by main streets, former municipal boundaries, or natural boundaries such as rivers. These service areas include several census tracts. It is not uncommon for service areas of community agencies to overlap. Choices about neighbourhood boundaries were made to make the data in the profiles useful to as many users as possible, and are not intended to be statements or judgements about where a neighbourhood starts or ends. The boundaries for these neighbourhoods were developed using the following criteria:

1. originally based on an Urban Development Services Residential Communities map, based on planning areas in former municipalities, and existing Public Health neighbourhood planning areas;
2. no neighbourhood be comprised of a single census tract;
3. minimum neighbourhood population of at least 7,000 to 10,000;
4. where census tracts were combined to meet criteria 2 or 3 above, they were joined with the most similar adjacent area according to the percentage of the population living in low income households;
5. respecting existing boundaries such as service boundaries of community agencies, natural boundaries (rivers), and man-made boundaries (streets, highways, etc.);
6. maintaining neighbourhood areas small enough for service organizations to combine them to fit within their service area; and
7. the final number of neighbourhood areas be "manageable" for the purposes of data presentation and reporting.

Input was received by the following stakeholders in the preparation of the final set:

- Public Health
- Library
- Police
- Parks & Recreation
- Planning
- Key Community Agencies across the City of Toronto

The following limitations should be noted when using these boundaries:

- 1) There may be smaller distinct “communities” within each neighbourhood.

¹ Toronto Community & Neighbourhood Services Department, and Toronto Public Health.

- 2) Users may consider utilizing more than one “neighbourhood” for service analyses when that service is on the edge of a neighbourhood boundary.
- 3) The aggregation of Census Tract data up to neighbourhoods is problematic in some areas where suppression exists at the CT level.
- 4) The boundaries do not coincide with Ward or service boundaries. This was intentional in order to preserve the integrity of the boundaries for pure social-economic planning purposes.

If using these boundaries please reference then as follows:
Neighbourhood Boundaries v.2
City of Toronto, Social Development & Administration Division

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