
MISSISSAUGA DIABETES HEALTHY CITY STRATEGY

Community Engagement Report



May 2024

**Prepared for the Strategic Initiatives Section, City Manager's Office,
City of Mississauga**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to detail the findings of the community engagement undertaken by Mivian Consulting on behalf of the City of Mississauga (City). The insights will be used by the City to inform the development of the Diabetes Healthy City Strategy (the Strategy).

What We Did

Through a series of targeted focus groups hosted in collaboration with community organizations, online community survey, and Health City Expo sessions, community members were able to share concerns and experiences related to diabetes. In total, input was obtained from 1,024 community members.



What We Learned

Details of the many important insights gathered during the community engagement are available in the full report. However, the eight (8) key findings to guide the City's development of the Strategy are:

- Address affordability of City programming to support participation.
- Improve program accessibility through affordable, culturally appropriate, and close to home programming.
- Support mobility through improvements to the transit system and built environment.
- Maintain outdoor spaces to promote physical activity, especially walking as a free physical activity close to home.
- Address food security and nutrition through accessible and affordable healthy food options.
- Create more solutions to address affordability of housing.
- Increase awareness of Type 2 diabetes and of existing resources while enhancing relevant educational offerings.
- Cultivate opportunities for connection and a sense of belonging.

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Mississauga has some of the higher rates of Type 2 Diabetes in the province. As rates are projected to continue to increase, the City resolved to engage the community to identify interventions that reduce the risk and burden of Type 2 Diabetes.

CONTEXT

With Type 2 diabetes affecting a growing number of residents, in 2021 the City of Mississauga (City) joined the Cities Changing Diabetes (CCD) Programme to connect to an international network of municipalities building and sharing strategies to prevent and manage diabetes.

The City is working with partners, experts and communities to develop a Diabetes Healthy City Strategy to prevent cases from rising. To this end, Mivian Consulting (Mivian) was contracted to conduct community engagement to better understand the unique challenges and identify community needs and priorities that will inform the Strategy.

PREVALENCE OF DIABETES

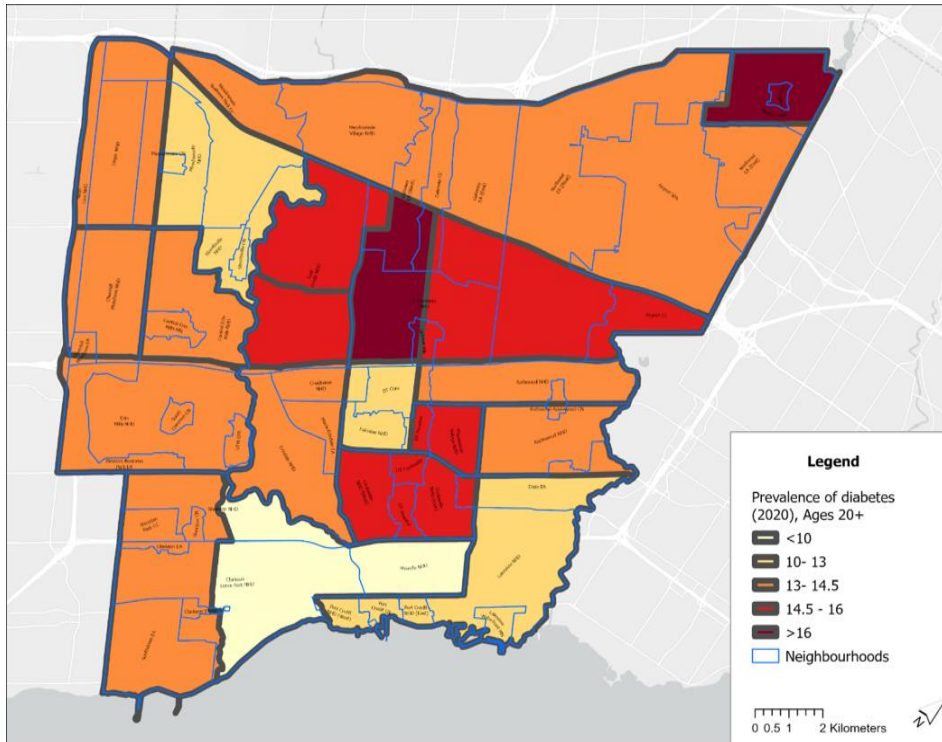
Based on 2020 data, the rate of diabetes among adults over age 20 is higher in Mississauga than the provincial average¹. In most neighbourhoods in Mississauga, diabetes prevalence rates range from 13 to 16.9%. The Ontario age-standardized prevalence among adults is 9.8%. In general, relative rates of diabetes in Mississauga are anywhere from 33% to 72% higher than the Provincial average².

The prevalence map highlights communities in three areas with rates over 14.5%: Northeast, Central and City Centre.

¹ Diabetes Canada. (2022). Diabetes in Canada: Background. Ottawa: Diabetes Canada

² Lipscombe LL, Ali FM, Lamb K, Rosella LC, Shah BR, Zenlea IS, eds. *Current State of Type 2 Diabetes in the Peel Region*. Mississauga, ON: Novo Nordisk Network for Healthy Populations; 2024.

Figure 1: Type 2 Diabetes Prevalence in Mississauga



Source: University of Toronto Mississauga Novo Nordisk Network for Healthy Populations and Ontario Community Health Profiles Partnership.

RISK FACTORS

There are several factors that contribute to an individual’s risk of developing diabetes, including:

- Age
- Physical inactivity
- Being overweight or obese
- Hypertension

Diabetes rates differ for people with certain socioeconomic factors including for example, income level and household food security status. Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups are more likely to develop diabetes and are more susceptible to some risk factors³.

It is critical to view these risk factors from a systems and equity lens as risk of diabetes is also correlated with racialized (i.e., visible minority and immigrant) populations. As highlighted by the research conducted by the Novo Nordisk Network for Healthy Populations, these risk factors and trends can be “attributed to inequities in the social determinants of health, such as material deprivation, housing affordability and food insecurity, neighbourhood design, as well as racism and structural inequalities, along with other barriers that shape preventive health behaviours.”⁴

³ Government of Canada. Diabetes: Prevention and Risk Factors. Accessible: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/chronic-diseases/diabetes/prevention-risk-factors.html>

⁴ Novo Nordisk Network for Healthy Populations, University of Toronto Mississauga

2. ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

With the goal of achieving an equitable engagement with appropriate representation, we were guided by data and collaborative co-design with community organizations.

NEIGHBOURHOODS / COMMUNITIES OF FOCUS

As a starting point, the diabetes prevalence map was overlaid with diabetes risk factor data to aid in identifying the geographic neighbourhoods/communities (henceforth neighbourhoods) most impacted by diabetes. Data was limited to the characteristics that could be supported through the 2021 census data. This included the following factors associated with risk for diabetes: immigrant population, visible minority (South Asian, Black, Arab, Indigenous, and Latin American), low income, and age 45-64.

To assist with identifying priority neighbourhoods for community engagement, areas of high prevalence (>14.5%) were overlaid with neighbourhoods that, based on census data, had a two or more of the above noted risk factors for diabetes. One exception that was made to the results of this mapping, was the prioritization of the eastern edge and north central area of Mississauga which, based on risk factors suggests a potential wave of future cases of diabetes if measures are not taken.

The mapping exercise identified the following neighbourhoods and specific cultural groups within these neighbourhoods for prioritization.

Neighbourhoods of Focus:

North East

- Malton

Central

- East of Streetsville
- Hurontario
- Uptown
- Airport area
- Creditview*

Eastern Edge

- Ninth Line*
- Churchill Meadows*
- Central / Erin Mills*
- Sheridan*
- Lisgar*
- Meadowvale*
- South Common*

North Central

- Meadowvale*
- Gateway*

City Centre

- Downtown
- Fairview
- Mississauga Valleys
- Cooksville
- Hospital Area

*Note: Neighbourhoods that currently do not have a high prevalence (<14.5%) though have a high rate for two or more risk factors.

CO-DESIGN APPROACH

Equipped with the neighbourhoods of focus, Mivian next engaged community organizations that work at the grassroots level within those neighbourhoods to use their expertise and knowledge on how best to engage directly with community members. Grassroots level engagement is vital for understanding the real issues and

challenges that communities have experienced. It is also an opportunity to gather ideas for how the communities themselves would like to see change happen.

Below is a summary of the timelines and activities related to co-designing the grassroots engagement plan with the community:

- *June 23rd, 2023:* Community Meeting (Virtual) to re-engage organizations previously engaged as part of the Cities Changing Diabetes launch to:
 - Introduce Mivian’s role, as City Connectors, in conducting community engagement to inform the development of a Mississauga Diabetes Healthy City Strategy
 - Share high-level engagement plan and request input
 - Request help in identifying community organizations in focus neighbourhoods for Mivian to connect with to facilitate community engagement
- *August to September 2023:* Pre-consultation with community organizations with established relationships in focus neighbourhoods to co-design community engagement. We heard that the best way to engage community members was through:
 - In-person focus groups in familiar settings
 - Language-specific focus groups to ensure equitable and inclusive engagement
 - Providing an honorarium for participation in focus groups and surveys
 - Agency support with disseminating language-specific surveys
- *September to November 2023:* Developed an engagement plan to conduct focus groups and promote survey completion. This included obtaining support for translation for language specific sessions and/or gaining access to otherwise difficult to reach population groups.

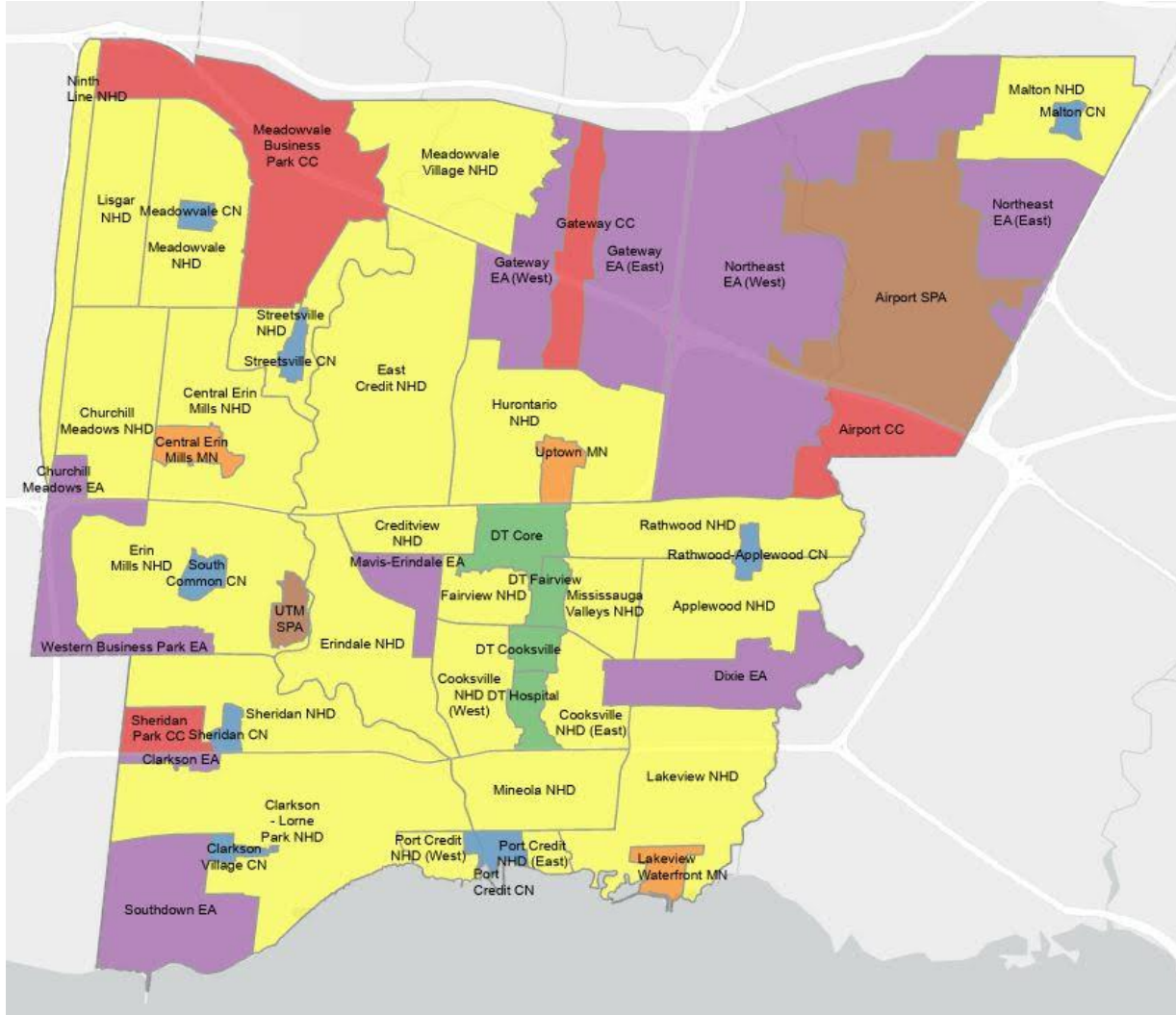
The following community organizations met with Mivian to discuss how best to engage community members; their suggested engagement strategy is highlighted below.

Table 1: Community Organizations Engaged to Co-design Engagement Strategy

Organization	Communities Served	Catchment	Recommended Engagement Strategy
Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre (DBNC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racialized • Immigrant • Youth • Low income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HWY 10 (west) to HWY 401 (north) to Mississauga/ Etobicoke border (east) to Lakeshore (south) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person Focus Groups – Youth, Family, and Senior’s drop-ins • Language-specific Focus Groups – Arabic, Chinese, Punjabi/Hindi, Spanish • Language-specific Paper Surveys – Arabic, Chinese, Spanish • Online Survey – link shared with clients
West Toronto Diabetes Education Program (WT DEP), a division of East Mississauga Community Health Centre (EM CHC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racialized • Immigrant • Youth • Low income • LGBTTIQQ2S 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City-wide for WT DEP • HWY 10 (west) to Matheson (north) Etobicoke Creek (east) to Lake Ontario (south) for EM CHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person Focus Group – WT DEP clients • Virtual Focus Group – WT DEP clients • Online Survey – link shared with WT DEP & EM CHC clients
GTA Northwest Community Health Services Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Asian • Seniors • Youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway and surrounding neighbourhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language-specific Paper Surveys – English, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu • Online Survey – link shared with clients

Organization	Communities Served	Catchment	Recommended Engagement Strategy
Indus Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Asian • Immigrant • Seniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Cooksville • Airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language-specific Paper Surveys – English, Hindi, Punjabi • Online Survey – link shared with clients
Interfaith Council of Peel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith Based • Racialized • Low Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City-wide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Survey – link shared with members • Note: Request to facilitate focus group at congregations sent via email to members, no response received
Malton Neighbourhood Services (MNS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrant • Black • South Asian • Youth • Seniors • Low Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person Focus Group – Seniors • Language-specific Paper Surveys – English, Punjabi • Online Survey – link shared with clients
Malton Youth Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth • Racialized • Low Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person Focus Group – Youth • Online Survey – link shared with youth
Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Asian • Immigrant • Seniors • Low Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language-specific Focus Group – Punjabi/Hindi • Language-specific Paper Surveys – English, Hindi, Punjabi • Online Survey – link shared with clients
Roots Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black • Seniors • Youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City-wide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person Focus Group • Online Survey – link shared with clients
Seva Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Insecurity • Low Income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creditview • Erindale • Cooksville • Downtown • Fairview • Hospital area • Malton 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language-specific Paper Surveys – Arabic, English, Hindi, Punjabi, Spanish, Ukrainian, Urdu • Online Survey – link shared with clients
The Indigenous Network (TIN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City-wide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Survey – link shared with clients • Note: In keeping with best practice an Indigenous-specific focus group was offered

Figure 2: Planning Neighbourhoods of Mississauga



Source: City of Mississauga

The targeted engagement efforts were also complemented with a broad city-wide engagement approach which included the following timelines and activities:

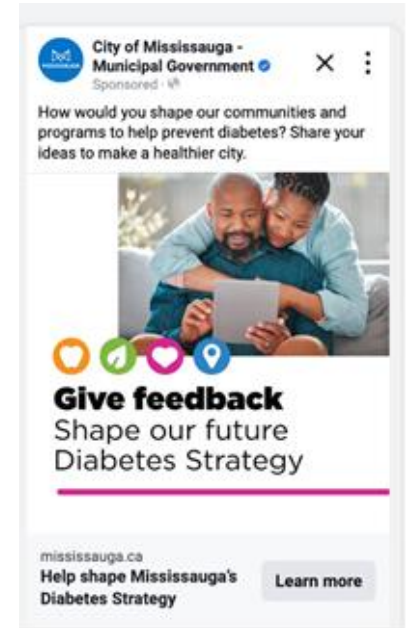
- *September 26th to December 15th, 2023:* Online survey accessible to all community members and the general public, promoted through social media, screen savers at Library branch public computers, and post cards at all community centres and branch libraries,
- *November 16th, 2023:* Diabetes Healthy City Expo hosted by the City with breakout sessions for Policy Makers & City Builders, Business & Agency, and Community.

FOCUS GROUP DESIGN AND PROCESS

To create a sense of comfort and familiarity, focus groups were hosted at community organization spaces and leveraged existing groups, drop-ins, etc.

Discussions were structured around three (3) open-ended questions which were shared with community organizations prior to focus groups; no changes were made or requested.

- a. **In your ideal neighbourhood or city, what needs to be available for community members to be as healthy as possible?**
Intended to serve as a “blue sky” question to generate ideas.
- b. **How does your community, social group or neighbourhood support your health? (e.g., to be active, to cook/eat healthy foods, to connect socially)**
Intended to understand what assets exist within communities that could be supported or replicated in other communities.
- c. **What can the City do to help reduce the risk of diabetes or the difficulties of living with diabetes?**
Intended to understand current challenges experienced by community members and their specific ideas and interventions pertaining to the City’s role.



Additional follow-up or clarification questions were asked based on the discussion. As much as possible, feedback and wording by participants was captured verbatim by the consultants and shared back with the main contacts at the community organization for validation by focus group participants. No changes were made to the focus group summaries reviewed by the community organizations or participants.

SURVEY DESIGN AND PROCESS

CCD resources such as the Urban Diabetes Priority Assessment were reviewed to inform the development of survey questions. Survey questions captured demographic details, diabetes status, community support systems, utilization of City amenities; gauged opinions concerning the impact of various risk factors on diabetes; and gathered suggestions for key areas necessitating attention and intervention. The survey incorporated two (2) of the focus group questions as open text and a third question related to the ideal neighbourhood / city.

The survey was reviewed by the Associate Director of Public Affairs at Novo Nordisk Canada (serving as the CCD Programme liaison), the City’s Diabetes Healthy City Strategy Core Working Group, key contacts at the Novo Nordisk Network for Healthy Populations, and the City’s Strategic Leader of Diversity & Inclusion. Feedback was incorporated or addressed accordingly. The survey was then reviewed by community organizations to ensure that the language used, and types of questions asked were appropriate and relevant given their understanding of their clients and the communities served.

The survey was made available online via SurveyMonkey and in paper format. Based on the most common spoken languages in Mississauga and guidance provided by community organizations, the survey was translated into Arabic, Hindi, Punjabi, Simple Chinese, Spanish, Ukrainian and Urdu. Printed copies of language-specific surveys were sent to community organizations as requested; completed surveys were collected following survey close. Any text responses on language-specific paper surveys were translated by professional translators. All surveys completed via paper were transcribed into SurveyMonkey to allow compilation of results.

The City promoted the survey through social media, [City website](#) and [engagement portal](#), which resulted in a reach of 43,859, 138,998 impressions and 657 clicks.

Additionally, to educate about the City’s work on the Strategy and encourage completion of the survey, City staff set up at booth at the Diwali Mela Festival on October 15 encouraged festival participants to complete the survey and hosted a “pop-up” table and display at Sheridan College where students were also encouraged to complete the survey.

DIABETES HEALTHY CITY EXPO DESIGN

The City hosted a Diabetes Healthy City Expo (the Expo) on Thursday, November 16, 2023. The vision for the Expo was to educate, promote, and engage on the importance of a healthy city to enable healthy living for all. It was an opportunity to educate the public, community leaders and members, and change-makers on what a healthy city is, could be, and should be; promote City efforts towards a healthy city; and to engage on what could be, should be in a healthy city and how the City can contribute to helping curb the rise of Type 2 Diabetes cases in Mississauga.

The Expo was a free public event including workshops, an information and demonstration fair (and free Diabetes testing) and a free community dinner. Free transit shuttles were offered though were not utilized by any participants and therefore cancelled. Child programs were also offered during the event, though this was also not utilized by participants. As there were insufficient numbers to run the shuttle, free Presto cards were offered in lieu. An estimated 180 people attended throughout the day’s event.

3. WHO WE HEARD FROM

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Over the course of a 2.5-month period from mid-September to the end of November fourteen (14) focus groups were conducted across the city within focus communities and across focus neighbourhoods, hearing directly from 241 community members most impacted by diabetes.

Table 2: Summary of Focus Group Conducted

Organization	Focus Group	Number of Participants
Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre	Arabic Families Group – <i>in Arabic</i>	18
	Chinese Seniors Group – <i>in Chinese</i>	38
	Spanish Seniors Group – <i>in Spanish</i>	12
	South Asian Seniors Group – <i>in Punjabi / Hindi</i>	16
	Youth Drop-in	15
	Westminster Church Seniors Group	4
	Knitting Group	14
	Queen Frederica Seniors Group	16
East Mississauga Community Health Centre	In-person Focus Group	5
	Virtual Focus Group	3
Malton Neighbourhood Services	Caribbean Seniors Focus Group	80
Malton Youth Hub	Youth Focus Group	10
Punjabi Community Health Services	Punjabi / Hindi Focus Group – <i>in Punjabi / Hindi</i>	6
Roots Community Services	In-person Focus Group	4
TOTAL		241

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Between September 25th and December 15th, 2023, 442 online survey responses were received, and 161 paper surveys were completed and transcribed into SurveyMonkey resulting in 603 survey responses in total. Of the paper surveys completed, 10 were in Arabic, 106 in English, 28 in Punjabi and 17 in Simple Chinese.

The profile of the respondents was:

- 28% diagnosed with diabetes.
- 47% self-identified as being at risk for diabetes.
- Every postal code in the city was represented, with L4T, L5B and L5N having the highest response rates, representing Malton, Downtown (Core, Cooksville, Fairview) and Lisgar/Meadowvale/Ninth Line respectively.
- All age ranges represented, with the most common age ranges to reply via the survey being 35-44 years (22%) and 25-34 (16%).

- All predominant ethnic identities comprising Mississauga reflected - with the top two ethnicities identified as South Asian and White (e.g., European ancestry) at 28% and 25% respectively.
- 67% born in Canada, while 22% immigrated before 2000 and 18% immigrated more recently after 2021, followed by landed immigration/ permanent resident (15%) and international students (5%). Four percent of respondents were refugees or refugee claimants.
- 21% of identified as a person living with one or more disabilities (sensory, physical, cognitive, mental health related or other), while 11% preferred not to answer.

Refer to Appendix A for Survey Respondent Demographics.

DIABETES HEALTHY CITY EXPO

On Thursday, November 16, 2023, the City hosted three (3) sessions at the Expo for Policy Makers & City Builders, Business & Agencies, and the Community. The sessions were attended by approximately 180 participants.

4. WHAT WE HEARD

KEY FINDINGS

Eight (8) key themes emerged from engagement with community members across Mississauga via focus groups, survey responses, and Expo sessions, forming a basis for understanding the broader community needs, and providing insights in relation to diabetes.

Relevant survey findings have been incorporated under each theme.

Direct quotes from community members relevant to each theme have been added in italics.

A complete summary of survey findings in graph format can be found in Appendix B.

Specific feedback and ideas shared by community members across focus groups, survey and Expo sessions can be found in Appendix C.

Additionally, any feedback that may not directly be aligned to the City's scope of responsibilities can be found in Appendix D.

1. **Affordability of Programming**

The most frequently heard feedback across all focus groups was related to affordability of programming within the City. Participants acknowledged the link between being active and having good health but felt that programs which could help with increased physical activity, were often unaffordable, especially for those on fixed incomes or with low-income levels.

There is a desire for reduced fees for recreational programs to make them more accessible to community members.

Various survey findings point to affordability of programming as a barrier to access and participation:

- 22% of respondents cited that affordability of recreation programs as a barrier to being or staying healthy
- 39% of respondents cited 'fees are too expensive' for their lack of participation in programming at community centres

The following quotes provide a voice to community members in their own words:

- *[The] City should provide recreational activities / programs free of charge, accessible for general public. The low-income cut-off for subsidy is too low to even provide basic necessities for most families. Therefore, people are not able to afford the city provided programs.*
- *Free activities for youth and fewer barriers to accessing recreational programs.*
- *More free exercise classes at gyms and recreation centres should be offered.*
- *Increasing the amount offered by ActiveAssist would help. Even though I'm really grateful that ActiveAssist is available, the amount offered is only enough for about two programs, which means it can last me two seasons. It is harder to stay active the other two seasons.*

2. Accessibility of Programs and Services

A majority of community members highlighted the need for improved program accessibility via focus groups, survey responses and Expo session feedback. While the first theme focuses on accessibility through affordability, this theme emphasizes aspects of accessibility as it relates to cultural appropriateness, proximity, and types of programs and services. We heard that programming and services need to be tailored to the specific needs of diverse cultural, demographic (e.g., youth, seniors) communities and offered closer to home.

Various survey findings point highlight some of the barriers to access and the impact on health:

- 56% of respondents felt that having things to do and places to go that are within walking distance are needed to be as healthy as possible
- 25% of respondents cited 'Programs or services are not available/open at a convenient time' for their lack of participation in programming at community centres
- 17% of respondents want more connection to their culture to be as healthy as possible
- 11% of respondents cited that lack of culturally appropriate recreation programs makes it difficult for them to be or stay healthy

The following quotes provide a voice to community members in their own words:

- *A lot of the things that stop us from getting involved is related to culture.*
- *Have to go all the way to Mississauga Valley Community Centre for aquafit. It is too far, have to take two buses to get there.*
- *We need more community spaces for programs to connect in our own neighbourhoods.*
- *We lack spaces like the Youth Hub, and we need more initiatives that offer free healthy food options and recreational activities. It is crucial for the well-being of the youth in our community.*

3. Ease of Getting Around

Community members unanimously highlighted the need for improved mobility supported through the transit system and built environment via focus groups, survey responses and Expo session feedback. This theme also captures suggestions for increased safety linked to methods of transportation and mobility to encourage greater use.

Transit

Community members suggested such things as: bus schedules that allow more seamless transfers; well-lit bus shelters at all stops; bus shelters that are next to bus stops; removal of snow mounds at bus stops.

Pedestrian

Community members suggested: longer pedestrian traffic lights; scramble crossings at major, high pedestrian use intersections; separation of e-bikes/scooters and pedestrians; well maintained, cleared sidewalks.

Other Transportation Options

Youth participants especially suggested a bike or scooter rental program as well as safe spaces to lock or store bicycles/scooters at community venues.

In summary, participants want more mobility options, and reliable, frequent, affordable, and connected transit system.

Various survey findings highlight the need to improve mobility:

- 44% of respondents felt that safe ways to get around the city by foot, bike, wheelchair or other personal mobility device are needed to be as healthy as possible
- Close to one-third of respondents felt that the current transportation infrastructure (i.e., MiWay buses, Go Trains, bike lanes) never (11%) or rarely (19%) met their needs to get around for work, school, leisure, etc. The most common challenges identified were delays, frequency, long transfers, and lack of connectivity.

The following quotes provide a voice to community members in their own words:

- *There is a significant gap in service for seniors, especially when it comes to transportation. We need better options and support for getting to medical appointments without financial strain.*
- *More bike lanes, which the city is doing a good job at but they need to be separated from the road to make drivers and cyclist feel safe.*
- *Bus routes are not frequent enough and no buses connect easily with others. Buses to and from Meadowvale GO are terrible and GO transit changed all the buses to go to Clarkson GO.*
- *Malton needs free bus fare for seniors and an increase in service and geographic coverage for Wheel Trans to allow residents to access where they need to go, especially given Malton's geography bordering Toronto and Brampton.*
- *I prefer public transit but by car the trip to work will take 25 minutes. By bus, it can be almost 60 minutes if I can make the connections, otherwise it can be almost 90 minutes in the morning and 75 minutes in the evening.*
- *Streetsville station has been neglected and is not interconnected to other places in the city. Streetsville station should have a direct to port credit station, but it doesn't. Cooksville station, but it doesn't. It should have a bus direct to Malton station but it doesn't, it'll take over an hour for a 25-minute car ride. MiWay doesn't even service to Erin Mills Town Centre with one bus. Streetsville Station is shamefully unconnected.*
- *Walking down Dundas very dangerous. Narrow sidewalk for traffic, no separation from road, lots of e-bikes and scooters. Don't feel comfortable walking to the grocery store because of this.*

4. Outdoor Spaces

Many community members, especially shared by seniors during focus groups, mentioned that they enjoy taking walks as a way to remain physically active, however given our weather and other factors, they are sometimes forced to remain indoors due to safety concerns. Various suggestions were provided including:

- Create/increase simulated outdoor spaces where individuals can experience nature without the harsh elements such as freezing temperatures or distressing humidity
- Plant more trees along park trails to provide shade; regularly clear foliage
- Provide well-maintained washrooms along park trails
- Add more lighting in parks

Participants intimated that given the cost of gyms and city programs, walking is sometimes the only exercise option that many can regularly perform. They indicated that maintained, safe outdoor spaces will support this outcome.

Various survey findings point to the barriers and needs for outdoor spaces:

- In their ideal neighbourhood or city for community members to be as healthy as possible
 - 63% cited that opportunities for physical activity are needed
 - 55% cited more connection to nature is needed
 - 51% cited the need for a safe neighbourhood
 - 63% of respondents that use their local park (78%), use it for walking
- Of those respondents who have not used their closest park or trail, the most common reason was not feeling safe (19%)

The following quotes provide a voice to community members in their own words:

- *Provide benches throughout city for people to rest, need a place to sit when tired from walking.*
- *Paths are cheap, free, and accessible, but it doesn't encourage people to walk if they are not cleared.*
- *More trails and green spaces because the more there are in a city, the more its citizens will use them to stay active.*
- *Encourage walking/exercise by sponsoring neighbourhood walking groups and mall walking groups (especially during cold months). This would get people moving while also fostering communication and contact amongst neighbours.*

5. Access to and Affordability of Healthy Foods

A significant proportion of community members shared via focus groups, survey responses and Expo session feedback that access to healthy and affordable food options within their communities is lacking or limited. They want to be able to access healthy foods through a variety of options (e.g. small ethnic shops, community gardens, farmer's markets, community fridges, etc.) close to home. While the City may not be able to directly impact the affordability of food prices, community members felt that it was important to voice this challenge given the importance of diet in the prevention and management of diabetes.

Various survey findings emphasize the need for improved access to and affordability of healthy food options:

- 64% of respondents cited access to healthy food as a need in their community to be as healthy as possible
- 39% of respondents are food insecure
- 29% of respondents can't afford healthy food

The following quotes provide a voice to community members in their own words:

- *Create a food bank where don't have to be eligible, would only stock fresh and healthy food.*
- *Food spoils too fast when bought from low end stores. But can't afford to buy at better stores. And the cost of frozen fruit and vegetables are becoming more difficult to buy*
- *Sponsor Farmers Markets where healthy foods are sold for lower than what grocery chains charge. Use community centres and other indoor and outdoor public spaces for this endeavour*
- *We need more farmers markets, and they should be available all year.*
- *When replacing strip malls with Condos and Town houses keep access to Retail to Grocery Stores and healthy food still available to neighbourhoods.*

6. Affordability of Housing

Community members emphasized the challenges and stress caused as a result of trying to find affordable housing or remain in their existing homes as cost of living and property taxes continue to increase. We heard via focus groups, survey responses and Expo session feedback how the affordability of housing intersects with the ability to afford health foods, other health-related costs and maintain health.

Community members are seeking more affordable housing options and ways to alleviate property tax burdens for seniors and those most vulnerable to increasing property taxes.

Various survey findings highlight the challenges and impacts of housing affordability:

- 43% of respondents cited that affordable housing is needed in their community to be as healthy as possible
- Nearly 40% of respondents identified that securing adequate housing is difficult or very difficult, with high rents / cost and limited supply highlighted as the primary barriers
- 41% of respondents are often (17%) or sometimes (24%) not able to afford items essential for daily living

The following quotes provide a voice to community members in their own words:

- *Providing appropriate housing at reasonable prices in order to relieve psychological, moral and material pressure so as not to develop diabetes; noting that my wife [developed] diabetes due to psychological stress because of not finding suitable housing.*
- *Housing not available in Malton, rent is very high.*
- *Most landlords need guarantors that I don't have and others do not allow or rent to refugees most especially when your rent is to be paid by the government.*
- *The average house price in Mississauga is \$1,057,232. You need a family income of like ~\$250k to get that. And rent has gone insane. Rent for a small 1BR apartment in the building I'm in has gone from \$1450 in 2019 to \$2400 today. ~65% increase in rent in 4 years. Young adults can barely afford to live here, young families absolutely can't afford to live here.*

7. Awareness and Education

The focus groups provided a window into the level of awareness there is with regards to Type 2 Diabetes, and the services available. While the majority of attendees were diabetic, pre-diabetic, or knew of someone who was, there were differing levels of knowledge regarding what health services, information sessions, and support groups, exist in each community and in the City.

The various engagements from focus groups, survey responses, and Expo session feedback highlighted the need to increase awareness of Type 2 diabetes and of existing services, programs, and resources. Community members are looking to the City to provide more health, wellness and diabetes-specific educational offerings, close to their homes.

Participants also suggested that the City look to create or facilitate collaborative partnerships so that residents could receive holistic support. For example, partnering with the school boards to provide after-hours space for organizations that can provide diabetes education.

One survey finding highlights the gap in awareness of existing programming:

- Of those respondents who have not participated in programming at community centres (42%) or libraries (67%), 40% and 55% were not aware of the programming respectively

The following quotes provide a voice to community members in their own words:

- *Community events that bring awareness - expose people to different activities and different food options, cooking demonstrations. Let people know what is available in their community to decrease risk and manage diabetes. Perhaps hosted by each Community Centre or Community Centre/Library Partnership. This would mean all communities would have access to the information or Fair Day.*
- *Don't know what is considered unhealthy food. Don't know how to cook healthy food.*
- *We need more educational programs about the consequences of diabetes, so that people will be interested in prevention of the disease. We need more educational programs on good nutrition. For example, free classes where people are taught what is healthy food and how to cook it.*
- *Involve community through more educational and health programs at grassroots levels closer to their homes.*

8. Connection and Belonging

This was an overarching theme that is woven into the previous seven (7) themes. When asked what needs to be in place for them to have optimal health and well-being, nearly all focus group and Expo participants mentioned the importance of the sense of belonging. Many were grateful for the existence of the agency and community run groups in which they are members, highlighting that these groups were a great way to meet other people, to learn, and to avoid isolation.

By addressing the concerns raised in the first seven themes, the City would clear the way for community members to more easily participate in activities that will bring them in contact with others and make them feel like they are a valued member of their community.

Community members are looking to the City to help create connections:

- To community and people
- To culture
- To food
- To place through affordability
- To existing offerings
- To organizations serving residents with diabetes or at risk for diabetes, and across other health conditions
- Through network of physical infrastructure
- To neighbouring cities for neighbourhoods on the City boundary

Various survey findings emphasize the desire for connection and belonging:

- In their ideal neighbourhood or city for community members to be as healthy as possible
 - 56% felt that having things to do and places to go that are within walking distance are needed
 - 44% identified more connection to people is needed
 - 26% identified lack of racism as a need
- 38% of respondents indicated not having enough time as a barrier to being or staying healthy

The following quotes provide a voice to community members in their own words:

- *I have been here 3 years and don't have anything that connects me to community. There is no opportunity for interaction, engagement. There needs to be opportunities provided for organic interaction.*
- *Would like Community dance clubs and dance parties, not only structured classes with an instructor.*
- *Physical activity: I don't think my community helps to be very active, even with a community Centre and tennis courts very nearby. That's because I still can't afford a membership at the community center and if I physically could play tennis, I don't have someone to play with. There are a few trails near my complex but 1) in the winter darkness there isn't enough bright lighting and 2) the trails aren't comprehensive enough to escape the city feel (as compared to trails in Guelph, for example). Social connection: I would love to find out more ways to connect socially with others that doesn't require money. Healthy foods: I don't see how my community supports this.*

5. FURTHER EXPLORATION AND NEXT STEPS

The City should continue to explore and engage with Indigenous communities and faith-based communities on ideas to help curb the rise of type 2 diabetes in Mississauga. Although contact was made with these communities or organizations supporting these communities, the level of engagement was low during the engagement period.

We recommend sharing any feedback provided by community members that may not be directly aligned to the City's scope of direct responsibilities with the appropriate public and private entities (refer to Appendix D). To support exploration and action on pertinent issues and ideas, we suggest advocacy efforts with Ontario Health, Provincial Government and Mississauga Board of Trade.

While an in-depth survey analysis was not in scope of this engagement, further analysis may be helpful to assess any significant correlations in responses across questions and risk factors.

The community engagement phase has helped to build momentum towards the creation of the Strategy that should be sustained. We recommend continued efforts to engage with the community to prioritize, co-design and implement solutions aimed at decreasing the rate of Type 2 Diabetes and associated risks.

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