




**TRINITY CENTRES FOUNDATION**  
FONDATION DES CENTRES TRINITÉ

trinitycentresfoundation.org 

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Montreal, Quebec H3G 1S6 

# Collier Street United Church

WORKSHOP

**DATE - Jun 11, 2023**

**PRESENT - 70+ church members 5+  
community members**

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## 1. Executive Summary

On June 11, 2023, consultants from the Trinity Centres Foundation met with members of Collier Street United Church and community partners to discuss reimagining the church's land assets for greater community impact. The meeting was well-attended, and the participants displayed high levels of engagement and motivation. The report summarizes the listening process, highlighting the congregation's desire to understand the community's needs and explore innovative ways to redefine their identity. The church members mostly agreed on the need for Collier to become more outward-facing and welcoming, but there were also concerns about change and the fear of the unknown.

The report emphasizes that the listening process is an important step in aligning the community's aspirations with the mission of Collier Street United Church. Additionally, the report discusses the need for the church to embrace change and adapt to societal shifts, highlighting the importance of strategic intentions over strategic planning. It also presents a comparison between "church questions" and "God/Community questions," urging the community to focus on the deeper purpose and intentions of their work. The report concludes with a demographic profile of Barrie, the city where the church is located, providing information on the population, housing, and age distribution in the area surrounding Collier Street United Church.

While the full process will involve deep community consultation, this listening process helps to ensure that the final vision is both informed by the community need and the purpose and mission of Collier United. This report summarizes findings from the meeting, and will serve as a record of the group's mutual understanding of how we spent our time, and what we are building towards. ***This document is not a final report. It represents an important part of the congregational listening phase but does not communicate any final recommendations.***

## 2. From Doom to Delight: Healing our Story

The first series of questions is rooted in this thesis: "Religious organizations are experiencing a once-in-500-year operating system revolution. These ancient yet adapting faiths are also stewarding societies' most precious social purpose real estate: land and buildings which have the power to either disperse or re-build a resilient local community. We are the people who are responsible for and who





influence how this transition is happening. If you are waiting for the young families to come back we will miss the beauty of what this moment means for us. All change can be defined by **moving from an old story to a new story**. How will we move forward?

The three groupings of questions we asked with the intent of embarking on a journey where we shifted our narrative from a limiting mindset to more hope and possibility.

- a) When I think of Collier's identity one word that comes to mind is,...
- b) Collier is most afraid of / when I think of Collier, I lament...
- c) If anything were possible, Collier would / when it comes to our future, we desire to be...

- a) The words that emerged were... Friendly, Welcoming, Worship, Christian, Outreach, community/family, downtown church, Christ centered, Tradition/history, Family, Children, Members love Collier, Love, Happiness, helpful, caring, inclusive, seniors meeting place, old fashioned, people, old religious community, together, nice place to go, sacred, blessed, feeding people, community, giving, Community Hub providing care and safety, lover of community, faithful followers, gathering place, faith community, breakfast program, spirit led, compassion, constancy, disciples of Jesus, big space.

**Noticing:** The top three words were **community, welcoming/friendly, and worship**. It is interesting that welcoming was something you identify as, yet question if you are welcoming and is that enough? If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we deeply need to be known by others, cared for, and encouraged. We need each other in ways that we might have lost sight of previously. To be "welcoming" or "Community" can simply mean that people can come to join us as long as they look, act, talk, and express themselves like "us." It is too vague! To belong is something entirely different. To belong is what, we believe, you all are looking for. The question I would ask is *what kind of attributes create the recipe for belonging to occur? (curiosity, listening, non judgemental etc. )* That would be a good place to begin discovering your aspirational identity and how you ARE community.

**Outlier words** to pay attention to: **Downtown church, old fashioned, old religious community**. We found it interesting that many mentioned you are from many neighbourhoods yet identifying as a downtown church came up often. I would lean into your location more and discover what it would mean to serve, more intently, your local downtown neighbourhood. We did also notice a limited ability to see beyond the "old" mindset of what church is and we think change may be difficult for many.

- b) The words that emerged were... Loss of young families, loss of young people, lack of young people, losing people, Closing, Change, Deterioration, no change to the current thinking, members leaving, loss of worshipping community, Being obsolete, sustainability, Collier history is lost, Small, Loss of Friendship, being





divided, not together as a family, redevelopment as condos, change we don't understand, failure, insignificant, irrelevancy, declining, loss of purpose, being a generational vs intergenerational community, a big empty building, feeling left out, not reaching out enough, false desire to relive the past, afraid of the unknown

**Noticing:** The top three words were **Closing, Change, unsustainable and loss** of families and young people. We feel it is important to lean into the tension of the words of change and closing. A lack of one can lead to the other. If you want to experience moving towards a different story it is going to take bravery and the embracing of risk to live into a new narrative.

**Outlier words** to pay attention to: **being divided, false desire to relive the past and irrelevant.** We feel there is this division between those who are seeing the "writing on the wall" and desire to embrace the necessary shifts, while others are digging in their heels in hope that the past will somehow return. As a leadership team, it is important to recognize that you will lose people in this transition but by doing the needed work, you will gain so much more.

- c) The words that emerge are: Bring people back to faith, full of community members, growth, space is used by the community, more active in the community, a hub of activity, fun, connected to community, a meeting place for connection and interaction, lively music, upbeat with an element of tradition, opendoors, a brave community led by the spirit, serving the community, modern, hub, safe space, welcoming to other faiths, mingling space, more events, safe space, renewed membership, communicating with the outside world, partnership, think future and act, revitalize, music young people will like, A place for all, support those around us, learn from our past and live into our present, prepare for the future, trust, family, redevelopment, downsize, sharing our space, a full church / with kids, more parking, maximize the effective communal use of our facility, relevant outreach, place of love, sustainable, happy place, spirit, thrive, joy in all we do, vibrant downtown meeting place, care and support for all, a place of diversity, a meeter of human needs, a welcoming faith community, joyful/excited, open to new ideas, energize the congregation, revitalize the church, lead successfully, learn from the 7 churches in revelations, a bigger part of the city, partnerships with others, deep spirituality, doing justice and living hope

**Noticing:** The top words or thoughts could be summed up as **partnering with others to be a fun, vibrant community hub that engages more in the city and brings about positive community impact.** We loved how the room shifted during this exercise. It's like it went from sadness to joy, from fear and anxiety to delight. As you focus on possibilities, on who you are becoming, this will ignite joy and hope into the fabric of the community. Keep desiring these things and moving to see them become reality.

**Outlier Words: Grow the membership and more parking.** if they become the goal of our community engagement, will create a posture that will not be received positively by the community. Instead love the people in your city with no strings attached and live your faith unapologetically, let the results take care of itself.



### 3. EMBRACING CHANGE

We see significant shifts all around. An unraveling of sorts. What is referred to by sociologists as an unbundling. *Unbundling is the process of separating elements of value from a single collection of offerings.* Think of a local newspaper. Whereas fifty years ago it provided classifieds, personal ads, letters to the editor, a puzzle for your commute, and, of course, the actual news, today its competitors have surpassed it in each of these, making the daily paper all but obsolete.

Ebay, Facebook, Twitter, HQ Trivia, podcasts, offer more personalization, deeper engagement, and perfect immediacy. The newspaper has been unbundled, and end users mix together their own preferred set of services.

How we watch movies - I remember going to the local video rental store in my small town. If the movie was out you needed to wait till it was returned or you needed to wait till next week to watch the next episode. There was no such thing as binge watching. Now we have multiple streaming devices and on demand viewing.

The same is true for meaning-making. Fifty years ago, most people in North America relied on a single religious community to conduct spiritual practices, ritualize life moments, foster healing, connect to lineage, inspire morality, house transcendent experience, mark holidays, support family, serve the needy, work for justice, and—through art, song, text, and speech—tell and retell a common story to bind them together. Now, we might rely on the Calm Meditation app, mountain hikes, Yoga, Instagram hashtags, Friday meals with friends, spotify anthems, podcast of our favorite speakers, and the latest protest or advocacy initiative.

If you own a video rental store you would look at the sales and think no one is watching movies anymore. But that is not true, it's higher than it has ever been. And it is the same with spirituality. We look at church attendance and say people are not interested anymore. Is that true? **Or are we just a video rental store in a culture that has shifted to Netflix.** How can we fill the spiritual needs of our community? It won't be what it was.

Change will happen! The question is will we be adaptive or become irrelevant. The key is moving from a culture of strategic planning to one of strategic intentions. What do we need to be and do to bring the vision to pass? How do we bring those intentions to life through everyday life and work?

This starts with being curious and **asking better questions!** Questions help us get to the deeper why and intention of our work.





**To address the awareness of this shift and the change required we engaged in an exercise called church questions vs God/Community questions.**

Often we come into Sunday's or church meetings and we get stuck asking the wrong things. I call that church questions versus community questions or God questions. **Church questions often create the church WE want, God / neighbour questions allow us to create what the community desires/needs.**

...

What would be some examples of what I call church questions? ...

Do we keep the pews?

What style of music?

How do we get more volunteers?

Should we have another committee form to address this?

How do we increase our budget?

How do we get young families/youth to our Sunday Gathering?

**God questions locate us in the deeper why, aligning us to our vision and discovering intentions. ...**

**Your God Questions**

1. How is God calling us to live out our mission?
2. How can we bring out our faith to the larger community?
3. Are we listening to the community?
4. How do we help the community through partnership vs charity?
5. How do we educate ourselves to be more trauma informed?
6. Do we have pride in the Collier ministry?
7. What do we think our impact is and what is the perceived impact?
8. How welcoming are we truly?
9. Why are we here?
10. Are we following God's plan?
11. Should we be a multi-faith church?
12. How do we practice what we are taught?
13. How do we better understand God's teachings?
14. Are we aware and sensitive to the community's needs?
15. What can we do to draw more people to church
16. How can we engage and motivate more people to participate
17. Are we engaging the indigenous community
18. Why are we not attracting youth
19. Are we listening to the youth



20. Are our values Godly
21. Do we walk our talk
22. How do we better live together with all our differences
23. Why are we in the particular space
24. Do we accept others and how
25. What can we do more
26. Are we accessible
27. Why do people not believe in God as much anymore
28. What do we need to change

**Noticing:** This seemed like a challenge for many as they are still very stuck in church questions. It was amazing how we listed our church questions and saw how disconnected they are yet repeated those same questions in the God/Community questions. We suggest taking some time to sit with your Community Questions and distill them to a few key questions you can then embark on discovering and being curious about together. The two questions that did emerge a few times is “Are we truly welcoming?” and “Are we listening?” This would be a good place to begin.

#### 4. WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR? (Demographic Profile) - MIKE WOOD DALY

How well do we know our neighbours? Some studies suggest that most people don't know more than 15% of the people on their street or apartment/condo floor. If that's the case, how well do we actually know our city?

Barrie is a Southern Ontario City about 90 km north of Toronto on the shores of Lake Simcoe. Despite some of the major employers that include, the County of Simcoe, TD Canada Trust's Regional Centre, Scotiabank's Regional Centre, Bank of Montreal's Data Centre, IBM and Hydro One, Barrie is increasingly perceived both as a bedroom community for the City of Toronto and the gateway to Cottage Country.

From the church's location at 112 Collier Street, it is a short 10 -15 minute walk from the Barrie Bus Terminal and Downtown Waterfront and other community attractions including the MacLaren Art Centre, and Heritage Park.





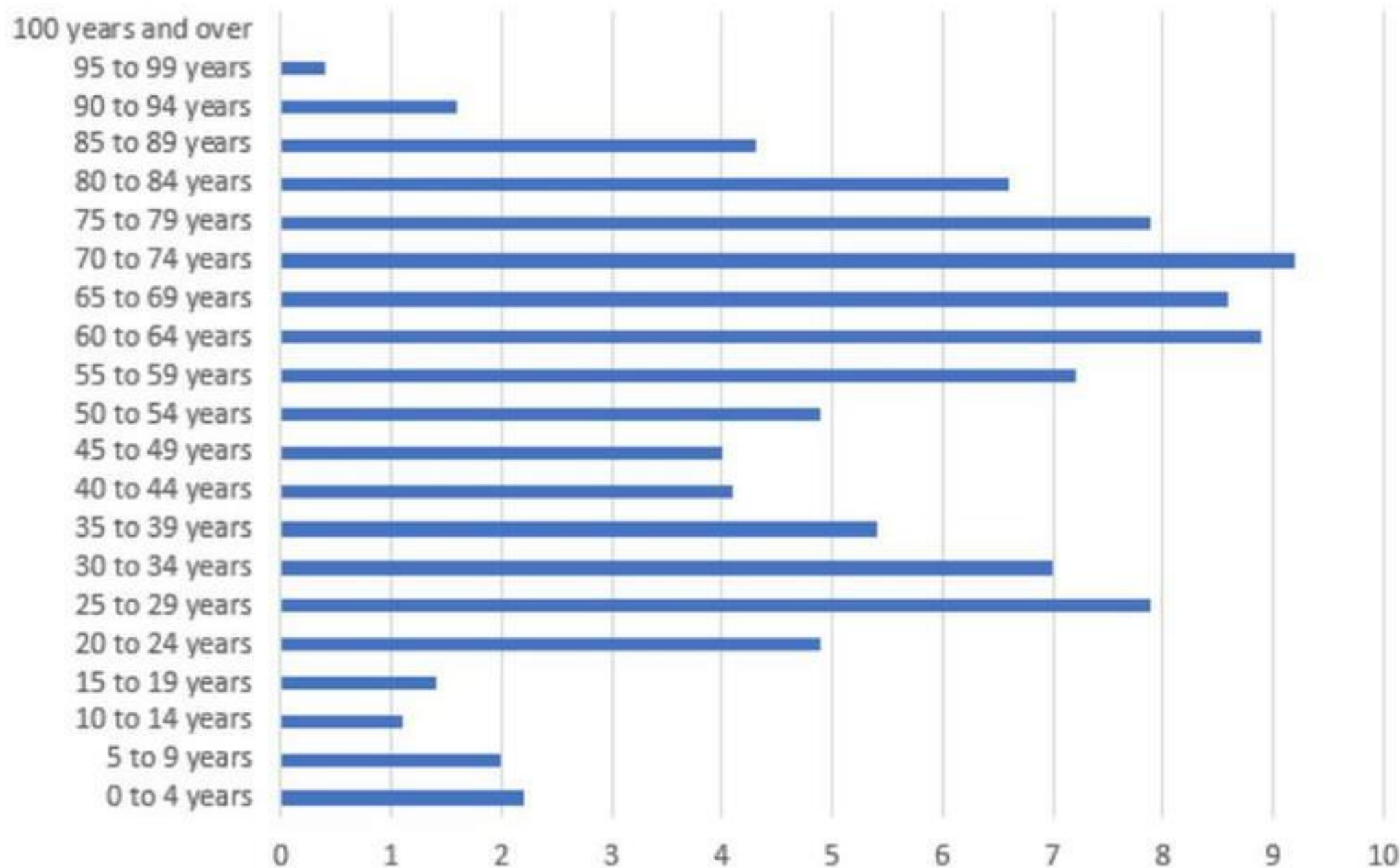


## 4.1 Population

The city's current population is 147,829, which represents a 4.5% increase over the 2016 census. In the census tract immediately surrounding the church the population is 4,166 – a 4.7% increase over the previous census and about 2% of the city's total population. The census tract is defined by the adjacent map. The area contains a total of about 2,800 homes and represents about 1.5 sq. km.

The area around the church is predominantly an older community with 39% of the population aged 65 or older. This is quite a contrast to the entire City of Barrie where only 16% of the population are aged 65 and older. The average age across the city is 40 years old, while in the census tract around the church, the average age is 54.

Population Distribution



## 4.2 Housing and Households

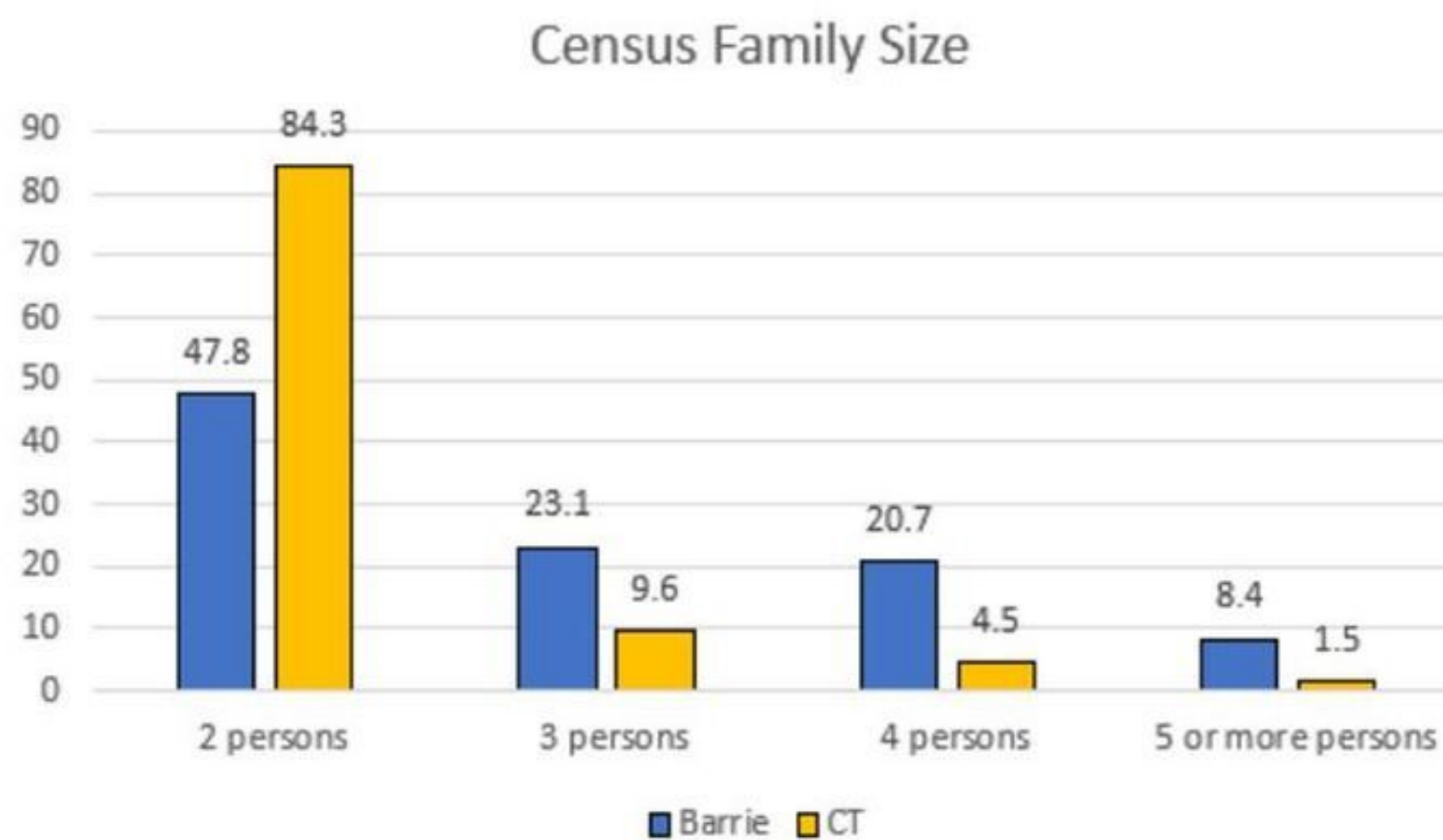
While more than half of city homes are single-family residents (58%), only 6% of homes found within the census tract are single homes. 63% of homes here are found in buildings of 5 storeys or more. Throughout the city, most homes (32%) are occupied by two people. In the census tract, the largest group is single homes (58%). The average household size in Barrie is 2.6. In the census tract, the value is 1.6.



### 4.3 Census Families

54% of the adult population in Barrie are married or living common-law. In the CT that figure falls to 43%. Family units across the wider city are far more likely to be larger (2.9) than in the census tract (2.2). The average number of children is 1.8 compared to 1.4 around the church.

One-parent families make up only 18% of the census families in the census tract while the percentage rises to just over 20% throughout the rest of the city.

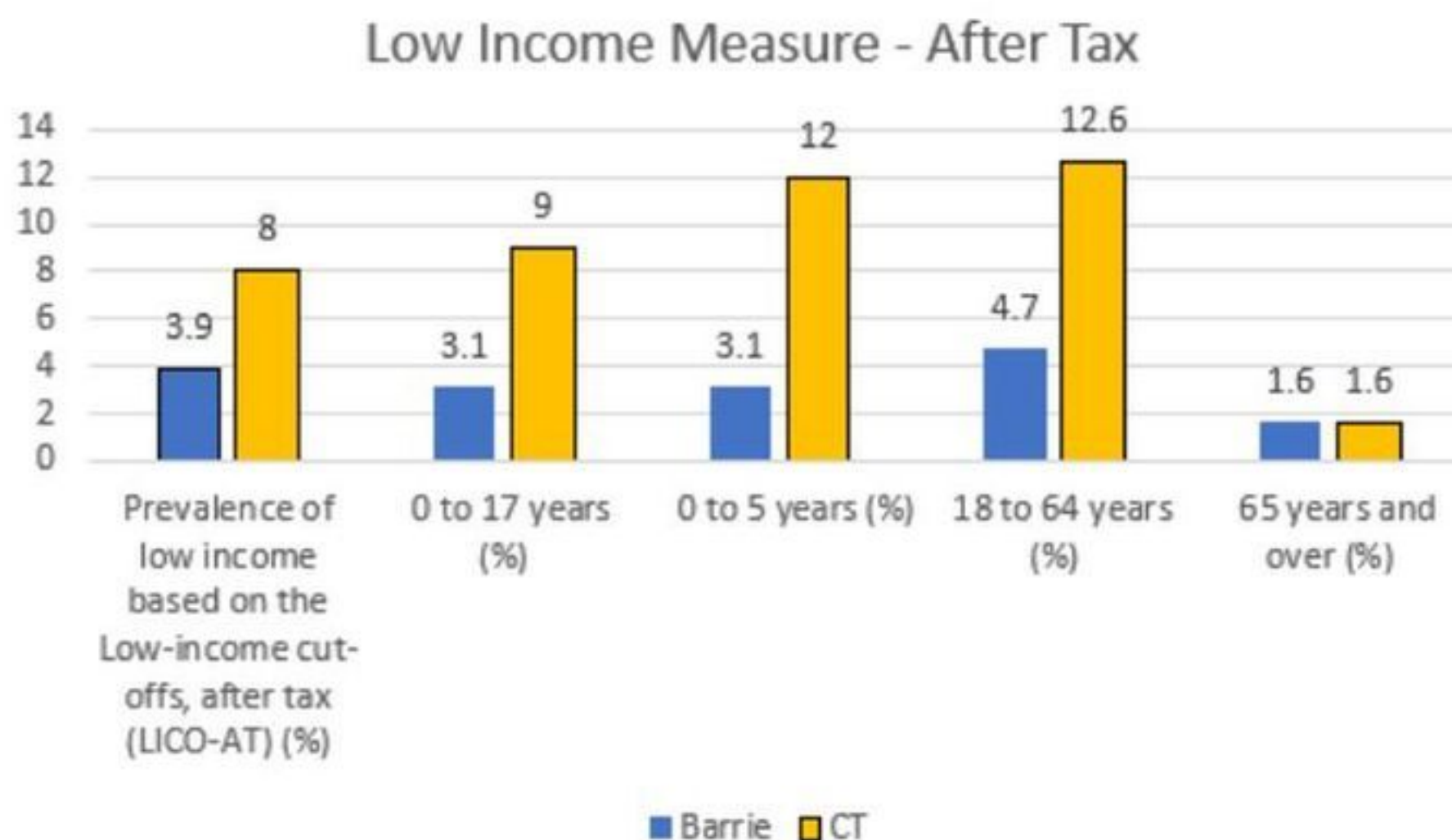


### 4.4 Income

The average after-tax income in 2020 for Barrie households was \$91,600 compared to \$60,900 for the census tract.

In the Census Tract around the church, residents tend to live much closer to the poverty line based on the Low Income Measure – After Tax, with 12% of children living at or below the poverty line.





Another indicator of financial well-being is whether your shelter costs amount to more or less than 30% of your total income. In Barrie, 27% of residents spend more than 30% of their total income on shelter costs. In the census tract, that number rises to almost 47%.

In Barrie, 19% of residents benefit from some form of Government transfer. In the Census tract area that percentage rose to 26%.

#### 4.5 Immigration and Ethnicity

17% of Barrie residents immigrated to Canada while 18% of the tract residents identify as immigrants. There is a dramatic contrast though between the two areas as to when they immigrated. In Barrie, only 5% of residents immigrated before 1980, while in the census tract that number rises to 12%. Conversely, 8% of Barrie residents have immigrated since 2000 while in the census tract area that number is only 3%.

Across the wider city, 17% of residents identify as belonging to a visible minority while in the census tract that figure falls to 10%. The top three visible minorities in the census tract are South Asian (2.2%), Black (2.1%), and Chinese (1.3%).

#### 4.6 Faith Tradition

There are slightly more individuals in the census tract that identify as Christian (56%) than in the city (53%). Approximately 8% of tract residents identify as belonging to the United Church, moderately ahead of the rest of the city at 5%.





#### 4.7 Education

For those aged 24 and older, 23% of tract residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. This falls only slightly behind the rest of the city at 25%.

#### 4.8 Employment

The unemployment rate in Barrie is 12.5%, which is 1.7 points below the tract rate of 14.2%. 75% of the workforce has a permanent position, 9% are temporarily employed, and 15% are self-employed. The top three employment types are Sales and Service (31%), Business, Finance and Administration (15%), and Trades, Transport and Equipment (15%). 21% of Barrie residents work from home compared to 15% of tract residents. Most commuters drive to work 75% and most (35%) can commute to work in 15 minutes or less.

### 5. CHANGING THE SCORECARD TO IMPACT MEASUREMENTS

What do we typically measure in church meetings? Budget, how many come on Sunday, how many volunteers.

#### **What might be better measurements if we are considering more social impact?**

Acts of kindness, member dedication, growing in our faith, more partners engaged in the space, the community outside the church is noticing what is going on at Collier, people want to volunteer, people are drawn into the church community, how many external contacts are made on a weekly basis, how many organizations utilize our space, do they feel like a user or partner, promote our music more effectively, are we retaining visitors, are we attracting volunteers, are we sharing our faith, how often do we smile and laugh, talk to people in the community, making the invisible visible, increase attendance and volunteers, better attendance in community programs, experience the fruits of the Spirit, returning involvement, have people heard of Collier and know where it is, do we reach people where they live, are we growing in diversity, is this a community worth connecting with, serving the needs of the community, are people coming to us for help?

**Noticing:** Like the God/Community questions we suggest sitting in this more and creating what you would see as impact measurements. The challenge will be moving from an inward to outward lens, where impact is measured by the impact you are having in the community vs people coming on Sunday or more people volunteering for church activities.

A little inspiration...

It is NOT just about rental to community groups. Or building some form of housing to make us more financially sustainable. It is where the poor meet the rich, on something of an equal playing field. It is where a Muslim meets a local artist or meets Gay Pride organizer. This is a naturally occurring bacterial culture - it's like yeast. An ecosystem of sorts. The church's tendency is to sterilize the container - keep everything as it is. Or, you can do the hard work





of rebuilding, while keeping the natural gut culture of a city. The place where the biodiversity of the community is not only retained, but given vitamins and minerals to become richer, stronger and healthier for all of society.

## 6. Primary Objective

**The top two priorities were financial sustainability and community engagement.** Preserving the church came up a few times and it may be a key reason you are facing resistance to change and moving forward.

We then presented 4 options and asked what would be your number 1 option. The tally is below.

1. Community Hub (10)
2. Property Development on the whole site (2)
3. Hybrid - Hub and Housing Development (19)
4. Something else that has not been discovered yet (5)

Based on these objectives we will listen with the neighbourhood, city and the land to confirm the best path moving forward.

## 7. Conclusion

Our time together was energizing and impactful. You have the people and the forward momentum to embrace what is next for Collier, we encourage you to drill deeper in these three areas...

### A. CRYSTALIZE YOUR EMERGING IDENTITY (CLARIFYING THE WHY)

Your emerging identity connects to a personality that welcomes hard questions, that seeks deep connection, that is curious and expansive and creative. Drill deeper into your identity by carefully defining key attributes, providing opportunities for further feedback, and claiming them as your own. With your purpose vetted and claimed, purpose becomes your lens for decision making. We do not see this needing to be a long, arduous process.

### B. CONSIDER THE NEIGHBORHOOD: WHAT DO THEY NEED?

Engage in an exercise over the summer that helps you assess the community needs as well as answer Who is my neighbour? (homework is attached) Questions to consider are: What do we have that the neighbourhood needs? What does the neighbourhood have that we need?

### C. REDEFINE SUCCESS

Look again at the scorecard we began at the retreat. This is a beginning framework. In your revisiting of this scorecard consider a few core metrics that connect with your purpose. Once you feel good about these (knowing



they will consistently need to be revised and are never perfect!), begin to look at each area of church life (worship, staffing, community, gatherings) through this lens, and ask; how are we doing?.

## 8. What is next?

1. Send out the retreat report to attendees and as a leadership decide how we want to engage with the material more deeply. (Collier)
2. Neighbourhood engagement homework. (Collier)
3. Create a list of 10 people that TCF needs to include in their community listening. (Collier)
4. Stakeholder interviews with the community and city (TCF)
5. Space analysis and Property Scan that talks to local developers and the city to see what is possible. (TCF).