

COMMUNITY KITCHEN ASSESSMENT PROPOSAL



Figure 1. Community Kitchen. Retrieved from <http://gibsonspublicmarket.com/>

Introduction

Community kitchens are hubs for community-based cooking programs where groups of individuals gather to prepare meals together on a regular basis (Tarasuk, 2001) while supporting food education and access through cooking and preparation (City of Vancouver). Knowledge gained from our community kitchen assessment could guide the City in allocating its resources to neighborhood spaces with potential for improvement, with aims of increasing the community's accessibility to safe, culturally appropriate, and wholesome food.

Project Objectives

- Surveying the physical conditions and programming of community kitchens in the areas West Point Grey/ Kitsilano
- Evaluating characteristics and functions of these community kitchens to develop understanding of their larger roles in improving local food security

Inquiry Questions

- What are the conditions of the facilities and programming of community kitchens in West Point Grey/ Kitsilano and how can these aspects be improved?
- How and to what extent do the current infrastructure and programming serve their functions in the community?

Background & Significance

1. Global food security, Community food security & Community Kitchens

Food security is defined by the FAO as a state, “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (World Food Summit, 1996). This definition implies a generalized approach to improving global food security that has observed much inefficiency and failures (Dilley & Boudreau, 2001). A more recently developed food security concept adopted by the City of Vancouver scales down from the global to the community level and as such, redefines the strategy to solve more specific food issues locally through an asset-based community development framework. Community Kitchens are identified as a significant

physical food asset that targets two major priority areas in the Vancouver Food Strategy: food access and citizens' empowerment. However, as community kitchens are community-driven initiatives, the city currently has limited knowledge about the efficiency and specific functions of the programs.

2. Community Kitchen Assessment at Kitsilano, West Point Grey Areas

Kitsilano and West Point Grey present interesting case studies with regard to community kitchens due to their distinctive demographic characteristics. Most people living in Kitsilano have post-secondary education (80.6%); with high average yearly income of \$83,581, almost three times the national average of \$32,100 (Statistics Canada, n.d.). Despite this, recent evidence shows the presence of a vulnerable subpopulation (i.e., seniors, single mothers) in the area. For instance, a temporary shelter in Kitsilano experienced full occupation within days of opening in 2010 (Howsan, 2010). As such, our project will show how community kitchens provide specific services for vulnerable individuals in affluent neighborhoods with positive profiles for food assets.

Methods

To answer the research questions above, we will assess six community kitchens. We will rely on purposive sampling, formally approaching kitchen coordinators through email to secure our interviews as well as snowball sampling methods to contact those kitchens harder to find. For the assessment of kitchen conditions, we will use observation as well as a survey to determine the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the kitchens' infrastructure and programming. To evaluate our own interactions with the community kitchens, we will ask each community kitchen managers to provide us with verbal feedback on our engagement.

We will record and analyze infrastructure present using quantitative methods to calculate percentages and represent these in a spreadsheet. For open-ended questions, we will use qualitative content analysis to categorize verbatim responses. We will analyze participants' perception on the quality of infrastructure and programming and identify strengths and challenges of the community kitchen. In our report, we will elaborate on the implications of these facilities for features of community security including access and empowerment.

Special attention will be paid to ethics, for example, ensuring our questions to kitchen staff are culturally- sensitive and positively- framed to reflect the asset-based development framework We will record survey participants' perspectives to incorporate in our final report. All community kitchen assessors will be in possession of the TCPS-2 Certificate for Ethical Research to ensure the research participants' perspectives are properly documented or when necessary, kept confidential.

Success Factors

Toward the end of our Community Kitchen Assessment, we will evaluate the success of our project based on the following criteria:

1. *Gathering complete data from a total of six community kitchens*

- Filled surveys with information indicated through an annotated map or spreadsheet

2. *Receiving positive feedback from our community partners indicating that we have engaged professionally*

- We will ask for this feedback after each of our site visits

3. *Following the asset-based framework in our report and recommendations*

- Good relationship with the community kitchens at the end of the project
 - Minimize subjective opinions in the essays
 - Survey question: Anything else that you want to mention? How do you evaluate us as interviewers?
 - Good conversation with the community kitchens
 - In the essay: Incorporate suggestions that stem from the ideas of the community kitchens
- Our project methodology faces certain limitations. The threshold of six community kitchens limits our understanding of the complex food insecurity issues in these neighborhoods. Also, the use of a standard survey might be too generalized to capture the conditions of individual kitchens we assess. Despite these limitations, our use of open-ended questions

and verbatim responses will help communicate specific assets and challenges within these neighborhoods regarding community kitchens.

By achieving this set of criteria, we will be able to provide the City of Vancouver's Social Policy Department with enough information on the kitchen conditions for updates to its Food Strategy so that it can best build upon the food security assets in these neighbourhoods, and also know which specific areas in the kitchens (i.e., safety, programming, funding) to best tackle through the survey findings. In addition, by employing most of the asset-based development characteristics to foster better connections with the community kitchen facilitators, we can gain their trust so that they are more receptive to outside support and/or knowledge transfer (i.e., the City of Vancouver) in the future.

Sources

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