Southern West Island Community Portrait

A consultation report for a better southern West Island

Acknowledgements

The TQSOI is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. When reading this portrait it is important to consider how these issues and needs may make this region inaccessible to its initial inhabitants.

This portrait would not have been made possible without the support and efforts of those committed to making the southern West Island a better place, for all.

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Table de Quartier Sud de l'Ouest-de-L'île

pivot — Centre for Collective Action / Centre d'action collective

Centraide United Way Canada

Contents

PART 1

Introduction

About the TQSOI and the Portrait's Purpose

There exists a myth of the West Island that the region is composed of only affluent residents, where no poverty exists. Not only is this myth inaccurate, but this belief leads to a lack of support and visibility for residents throughout the region. The Table de Quartier Sud de l'Ouest de l'Île (TQSOI), a non-profit community organization, was created out of the desire to improve the quality of life for all residents of the southern West Island (SWI).

The TQSOI facilitates a roundtable and unites residents, elected officials from all three levels of government (municipal, provincial and federal), community organizations, as well as businesses and institutions. The TQSOI encourages collaboration in the community in order to develop a global vision and to achieve greater results by acting collectively on making improvements in the community.

Seven years after the TQSOI published its first portrait of the southern West Island in 2016, the needs and issues in these communities have been reassessed. The results of this process are presented in this portrait. The purpose of this portrait is to guide the creation of the TQSOI's next Social Development Action Plan for 2024-2029, and residents, community organizations, and elected officials, are encouraged to use this document to better serve the needs of the southern West Island.

The Portrait Process

How the Portrait Came About

In September 2023, the Social Development Action Plan Committee (SDAPC) was created to serve as a steering committee for the entire Social Development Community Planning Process, which includes this Community Portrait and the Social Development Action Plan 2024-2029.

The SDAPC is composed of 11 members: the President of the TQSOI Board of Directors, three members of the TQSOI Board of Directors, the TQSOI Executive Director, four TQSOI staff members, a community organizer, and a community planning consultant.

The SDAPC met once a month to offer recommendations and make decisions about the Portrait consultation process, various public events and the production of the portrait.

The portrait explores the new, partially-met and unmet needs that priority populations, people and communities experiencing poverty, exclusion and barriers to well-being, of the southern West Island have been facing since 2016, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and in consideration of the rising cost of living.

The data in this portrait is composed of responses obtained from the public consultation, statistical sources, as well as community reports. All statistical information in the portrait is from the Statistics Canada 2021 Census, unless otherwise mentioned.

The three-month public consultation period, from November 2023 to January 2024, used six different methods: a public consultation event; a virtual consultation platform; a photo-mapping tool; public kiosks; focus groups; and interviews. The consultation process involved more than a total of 110 participants, mostly residents and community workers. The published report was presented at a public event in March 2024.

The content presented in this document is based directly on opinions expressed by residents and community members who participated in one or more surveys and workshops organized by the TQSOI between November 2023 and January 2024. Unless otherwise indicated, the opinions expressed by the participants in this consultation have not been further studied or validated by other research. As such, this document should be considered a consultation report that reflects various opinions of residents and organizations connected to the TQSOI, and not a source of documented and researched facts about issues affecting the southern West Island.

Definitions

Terms and Concepts

General
- **Low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT)** refers to the unadjusted after-tax income of household pertaining to a person that falls below the threshold applicable to the person based on household size (Statistics Canada, 2022).
- **Priority Populations** refers to people and communities experiencing poverty, exclusion and barriers to well-being.

Housing
- **Social housing** is a broad category of non-market and not for profit housing funded by government bodies (City of Montreal, 2023).
- **Cooperative housing** is a form of social housing that allows individuals to become shareholders in a corporation that owns the property and is given exclusive rights to a unit (Homelessness Action Research Team, n.d.).
- **Densification** refers to increasing housing density in urban centers (Office québécois de la langue française, 2004).
- **Rezoning** refers to changing the existing zoning bylaws with the purpose of exempting technical obstacles with regards to permits and certifications for a housing project (Homelessness Action Research Team, n.d.).
- **Gentrification** is an indirect form of displacement of underprivileged citizens facing housing insecurities due to a sudden increase in real estate values in the neighborhood (Office québécois de la langue française, 2004).
- **Mixed-income communities** refers to a diversity of all types of residential properties which cater to different socio-economic classes (Homelessness Action Research Team, n.d.).

Food Security

- **Food Security** refers to when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (World Bank, n.d. a).
- **Food Insecurity** is an inadequate or uncertain access to healthy food to support a health and active life, that can be occasional or persist in time (Plante & Paquette, 2022).
- **Food Desert** is an area with a lack of access to healthy food options, especially fresh fruits and vegetables (Food Empowerment Project, n.d.).

Transit

- **Transit-oriented development** is a planning and design strategy that consists in promoting urban development that is compact, mixed-use, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, and closely integrated with mass transit (World Bank, n.d. b).
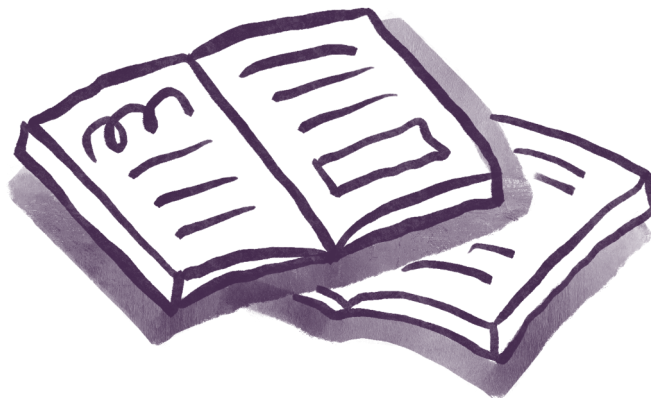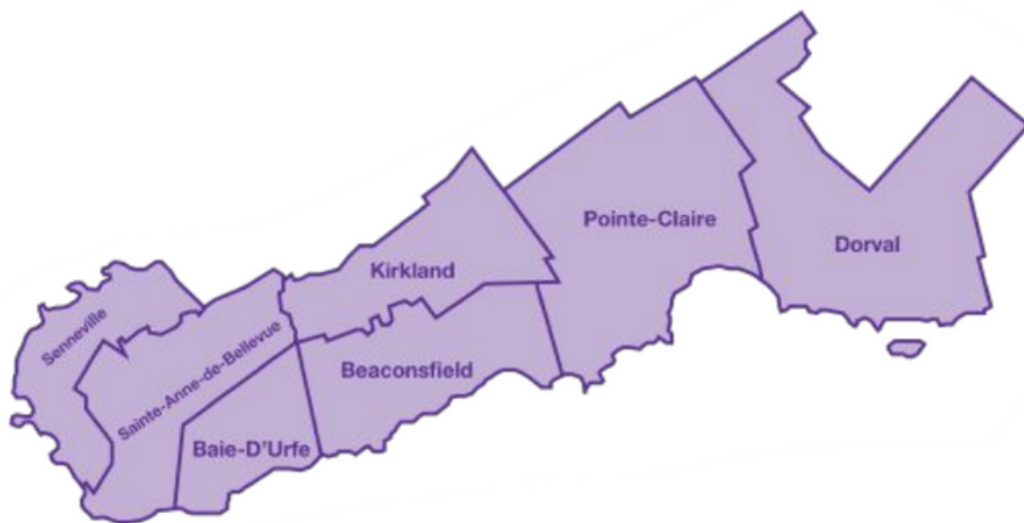
Overview of the Southern West Island

Territory Map

With an area of about 85 square kilometers, the territory of the southern West Island includes seven municipalities: Baie-d'Urfé, Beaconsfield, Dorval, Kirkland, Pointe-Claire, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, and Senneville, on the Island of Montreal.

The Make-up of the Southern West Island

Figure 1

Total Population by Age Groups per Municipality of the Southern West Island

	Baie-d'Urfé	Beaconsfield	Dorval	Kirkland	Pointe-Claire	Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue	Senneville
■ 0 to 14 years old	505	3470	2655	3065	4880	545	125
■ 15 to 64 years old	2270	12040	12600	12500	19295	3365	585
■ 65 years old and older	985	3775	4055	3855	9330	1120	230
■ Total Population	3755	19280	19305	19410	33485	5025	940
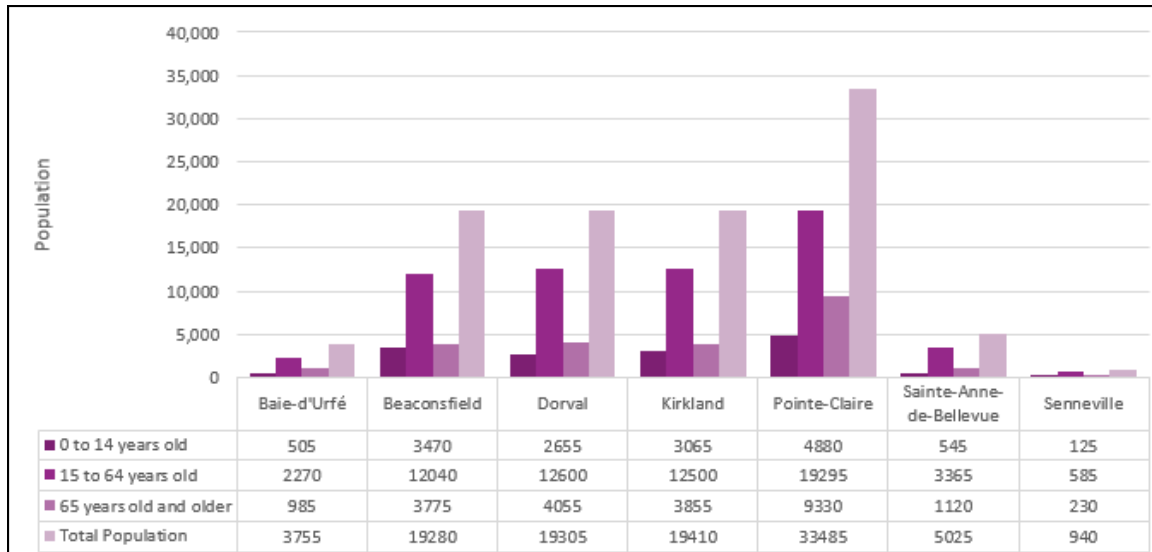
Figure 2

Population in the Southern West Island with a Low Income based on the Low Income Measure, After-Tax (LIM-AT)

	Baie-d'Urfé	Beaconsfield	Dorval	Kirkland	Pointe-Claire	Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue	Senneville
■ 0 to 17 years old	55	310	300	390	465	60	15
■ 18 to 64 years old	120	675	1070	740	1205	405	35
■ 65 years and older	45	210	540	200	905	90	10
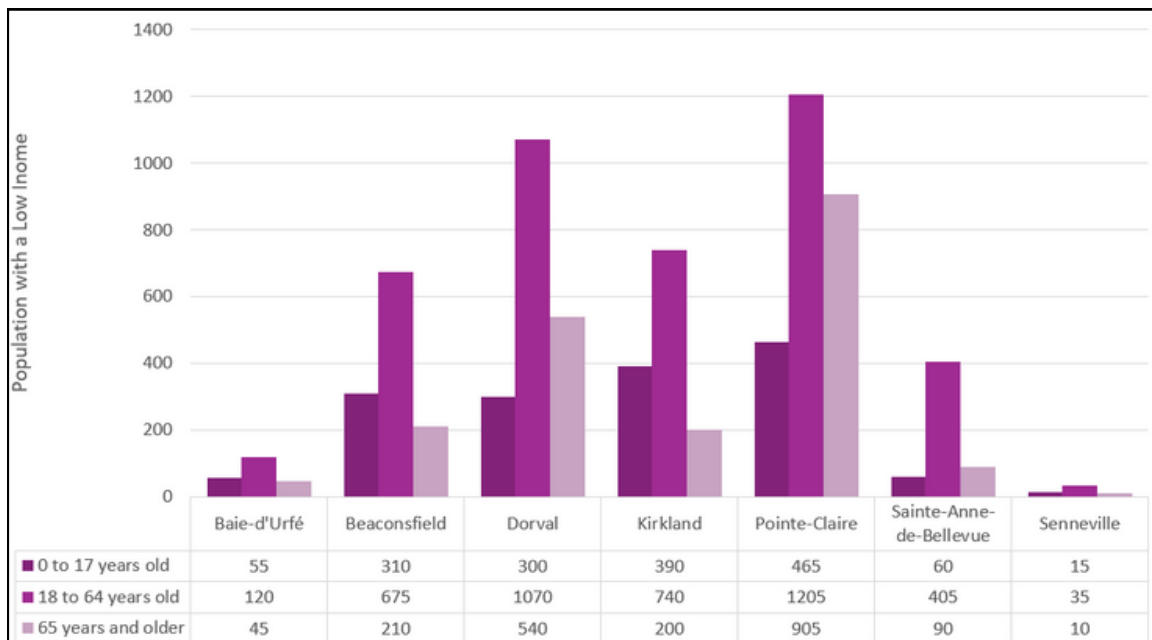
Population & Change

101,200

Total combined population of the southern West Island

Pointe-Claire has the largest total population representing 33.1% of the total population in the southern West Island, followed by Kirkland at 19.2% and Dorval at 19.1%, as shown in Figure 1. The **most significant growth is in Pointe-Claire** at 6.7%.

Population & Age

15.1%

of the population of the southern West Island is **between 0 and 14 years old**, with Pointe-Claire representing 32% of this age group in the southern West Island, followed by Beaconsfield at 22.8% and Kirkland at 20.1%., as shown in Figure 1.

23.1%

of the population of the southern West Island **is 65 years and older**, with Pointe-Claire representing 40% of this age group in the southern West Island, followed by Dorval at 17.4% and Kirkland at 16.5%, as shown in Figure 1.

Population & Income

7.8%

of the total southern West Island population lives on a low income.

~1 in 3

people living on a low income in the southern West Island live in Pointe-Claire (32.8%), followed by Dorval at 24.4% and Kirkland at 17%, as Figure 2 shows.

Areas of Interest

How to use the portrait

With a summary page that lists the issues and needs for each of the Areas of Interest as well as an introductory page, titled "At A Glance", and a more detailed explanation of the issues and needs obtained from the public consultation data, titled "Specific Needs", the following pages provide an overview of the many areas that concern the southern West Island. Each area of interest has been colour-coded and has an associated symbol to act as a quick reference tool for advocacy and planning:

Housing

Food Security

Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion

Health

Seniors

Family, Early Childhood, and Youth

Education

Transit

Environment

Housing

Summary : Needs and Issues

- **Limited number of rental units**
- **Increasing rental prices and housing costs**
- **The lack of social and cooperative housing options worsens the housing crisis**
- **Densification and rezoning**
- **Gentrification**
- **Lack of meaningful public input in decision making processes**
- **Lack of legal assistance for housing and rent related issues**
- **Lack of housing that accommodates diverse needs**
- **Need for mixed-income communities**
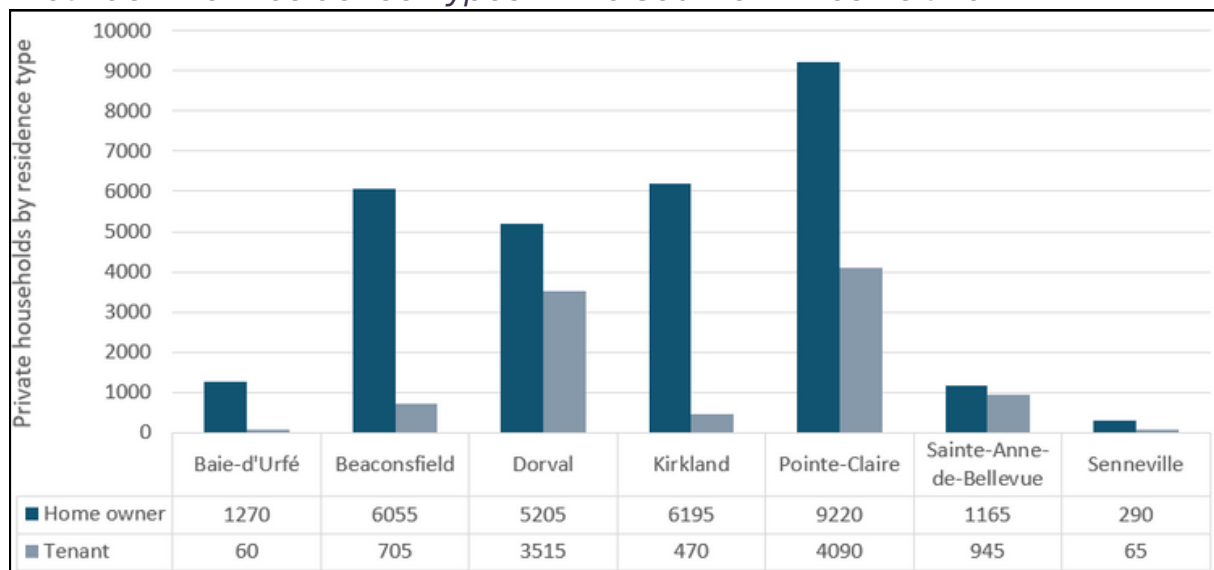- **Loss of green spaces and biodiversity**

Housing

At a Glance

The range of housing-related needs have grown across the southern West Island as the issues have diversified and intensified since the last portrait in 2016. These needs are related to housing affordability, accessibility, and inclusivity; housing development pressures; infrastructure decisions; and environmental considerations.

As Figure 3 demonstrates, in some municipalities tenants represent a significant percentage of residence types. By outlining the new and unmet needs in the following pages, efforts can be geared toward addressing existing housing inequities and pressures with the goal of ensuring sustainable and livable housing options for all residents of the southern West Island.

Figure 3

Breakdown of Residence Types in the Southern West Island

|	Baie-d'Urfé	Beaconsfield	Dorval	Kirkland	Pointe-Claire	Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue	Senneville
■ Home owner	1270	6055	5205	6195	9220	1165	290
■ Tenant	60	705	3515	470	4090	945	65

Housing
Specific Needs

1. Housing Affordability

- The limited number of rental units and increasing rental prices have made housing options in the southern West Island increasingly unaffordable, particularly for single adults, disadvantaged families, and seniors on fixed incomes. In fact, out of the four municipalities with available data, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue and Beaconsfield have a rental vacancy rate of less than 0.5%, while Dorval has a rental vacancy rate of less than 3% (Observatoire Grand Montréal, n.d.).

- Participants expressed concerns about rising rents and housing costs. In comparison to Greater Montreal with an average monthly rent of $1002, from the recorded rents in the southern West Island, Pointe-Claire has the highest average monthly rent at $1,507, followed by Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue at $1,302, Beaconsfield at $1,260 and Dorval at $908 (Observatoire Grand Montréal, n.d.). High rents and housing costs contribute to financial difficulties for priority populations, which leads to housing insecurity and homelessness.

- Participants express the need for social and cooperative housing options in the southern West Island to alleviate the housing pressures for priority populations in particular.
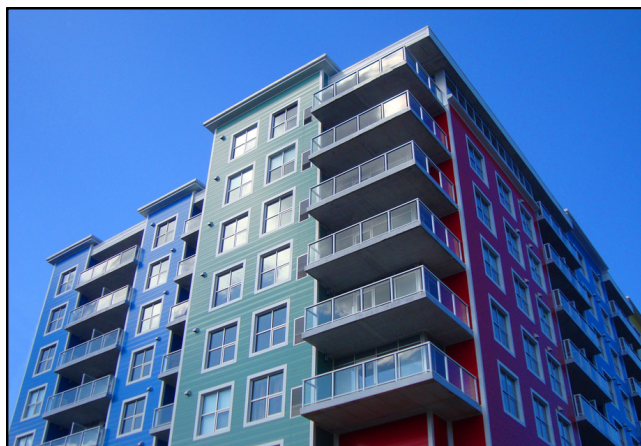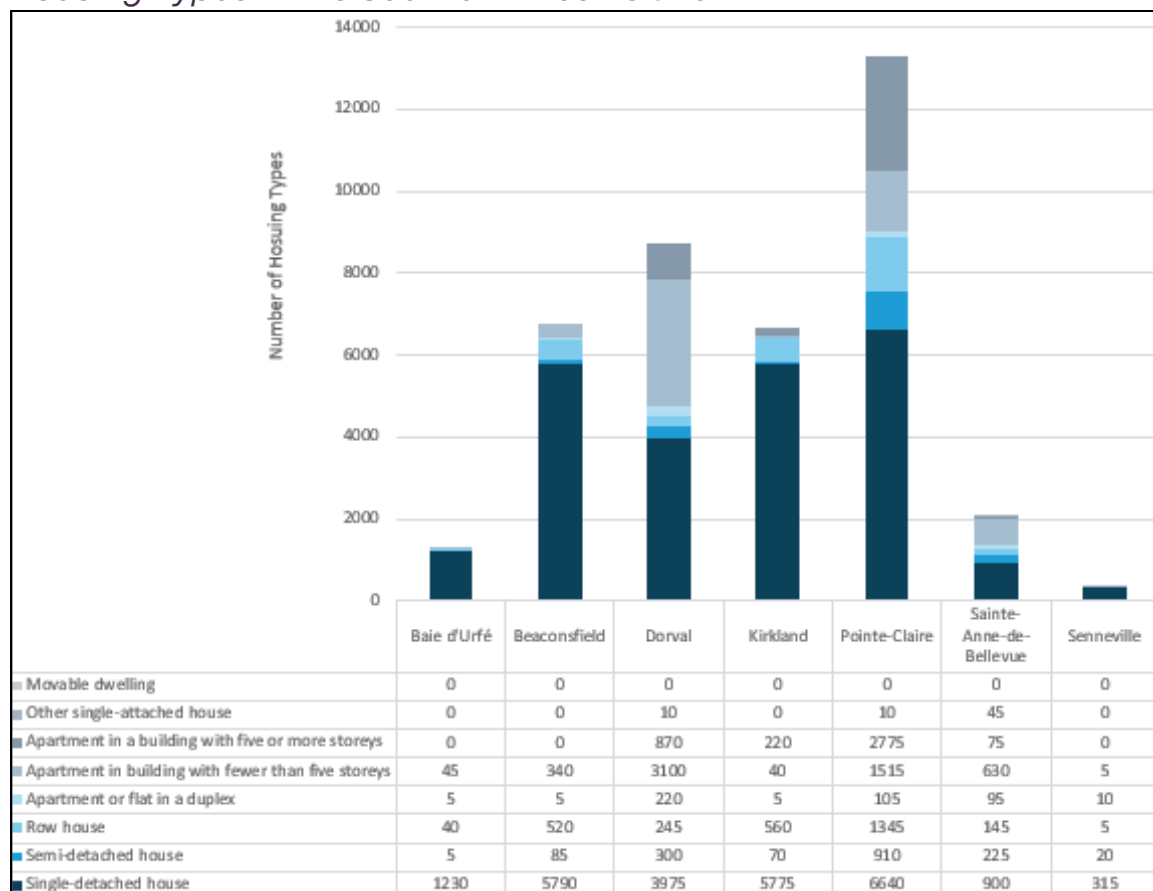
2. Development Pressures

- Densification and rezoning to allow for high-density development, according to participants, occurs without adequate planning. This can strain city services and can decrease the availability of affordable housing. This leads to 'gentrification', forcing residents to move elsewhere, as the cost of a decent quality of life in the area has increased beyond their means or the feeling that the area has changed.

- According to Figure 4, "there are more single-detached homes and fewer low-rise apartments on the West Island compared with Montreal. Baie-d'Urfé, Senneville, Beaconsfield and Kirkland have the least diverse housing options with 85-93% of their housing stock being single-detached homes" (Tissari, 2024).

Figure 4

Housing Types in the Southern West Island

	Baie d'Urfé	Beaconsfield	Dorval	Kirkland	Pointe-Claire	Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue	Senneville
Movable dwelling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other single-attached house	0	0	10	0	10	45	0
Apartment in a building with five or more storeys	0	0	870	220	2775	75	0
Apartment in building with fewer than five storeys	45	340	3100	40	1515	630	5
Apartment or flat in a duplex	5	5	220	5	105	95	10
Row house	40	520	245	560	1345	145	5
Semi-detached house	5	85	300	70	910	225	20
Single-detached house	1230	5790	3975	5775	6640	900	315

- Residents express concerns about the loss of green spaces and biodiversity due to an increase in large housing developments.

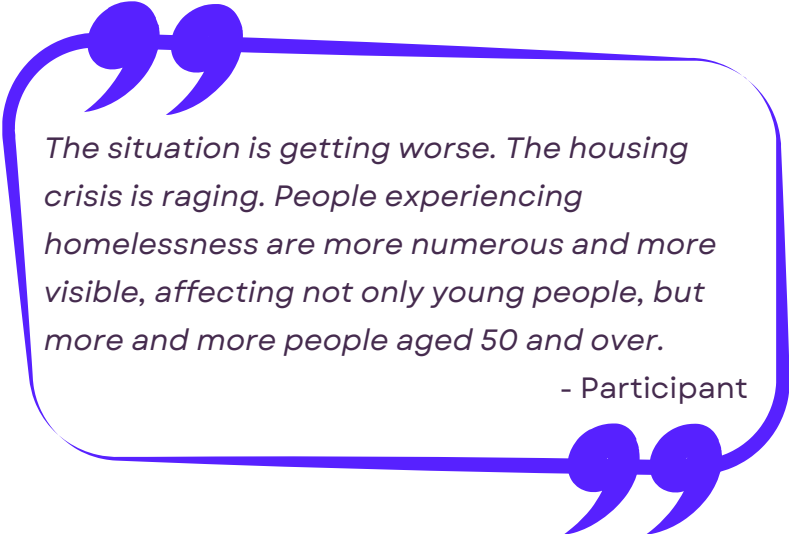### 3. Community Engagement and Representation

- Participants report a lack of meaningful public input in decision-making processes, with top-down decisions from governments and developers dominating.

4. Infrastructure and Services

- Participants express a need for better access to legal assistance for housing and rent-related issues.
- A need for services and support for individuals under 65, especially for those facing housing insecurity, is expressed by participants.
- Participants voiced concerns about a lack of social and senior housing to address homelessness and provide security for priority populations.

5. Accessibility and Inclusivity

- Participants express a concern for the lack of housing developments that accommodate diverse needs, including those of people living with disabilities.
- Participants express a need for mixed-income communities to ensure that the community remains diverse and accessible for all.

> *The situation is getting worse. The housing crisis is raging. People experiencing homelessness are more numerous and more visible, affecting not only young people, but more and more people aged 50 and over.*
>
> *- Participant*

Food Security

Summary : Needs and Issues

- **Single adults and seniors are increasingly facing food insecurity**
- **Accessibility to fresh and affordable food is difficult due to 'food deserts'**
- **Limited access to nutritious options for culturally diverse diets**
- **Need for more collaborative efforts and a crossover actions**
- **Need for more community gardens**
- **Need to increase access to locally-sourced produce**
- **Need for education on food preparation and nutrition**
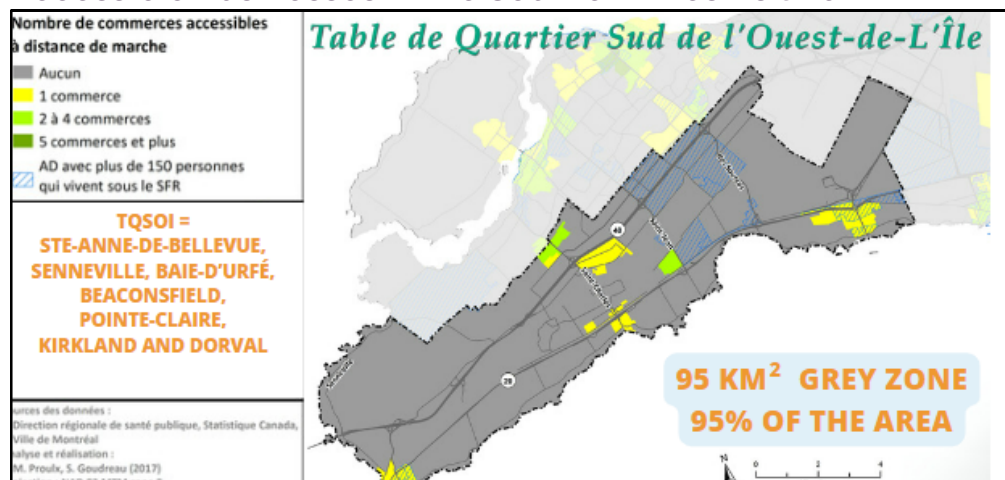
Food Security

At a Glance

The current landscape of food security in the southern West Island includes a range of concerns related to accessibility, affordability, and availability of food, particularly affecting single adults, families with young children, and seniors with fixed incomes. Special concern is placed on the need for fresh and culturally-diverse food options.

Also, the region of the southern West Island is home to 'food deserts' as shown in Figure 5 (Bertrand & Goudreau, 2014a, 2014b, as cited in Lemaire St-Gelais, 2023), "where 95% of the residents of the southern West Island do not have access to a business at a walkable distance" (Lemaire St-Gelais, 2023).

There is a pressing need to address food security challenges in the southern West Island, particularly in light of an increase in the number of new clients of food-assistance programs, the economic hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the increasing effects of the climate crisis on food production.

Figure 5

Accessible Businesses in the Southern West Island

Food Security

Specific Needs

1. Changing Clientele at Food Banks

- Participants revealed that there has been a notable increase in the number of single adults and seniors, many of whom are on a fixed income-seeking food assistance.
- Seniors, especially those who developed illnesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, now face additional medical expenses, exacerbating their financial capacity to afford food.

2. Affordability and Accessibility Issues

- Accessibility to fresh and affordable food is a significant concern, with many areas in the southern West Island designated as 'food deserts' where accessibility to food, particularly fresh produce, is a concern due to factors such as location and availability.
- Residents make long and tiring journeys using public transit to purchase groceries or access food-assistance services.
- With the high cost of groceries due to inflation and production issues, many residents struggle to afford essential food items.
- There is limited access to nutritious options that meet a variety of diverse and appropriate food preferences and diets.

> *I get my federal pension at the end of the month, but it no longer goes far enough anymore to cover food costs.*
>
> *- Participant*

3. Community Collaboration and Empowerment

- Participants expressed that an increase in collaborative efforts and a crossover of actions among organizations is needed to address food security comprehensively and effectively.
- Participants suggest a need for more community gardens, to increase access to locally-sourced produce, and to provide education on food preparation and nutrition.

Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion

Summary : Needs and Issues

- **The southern West Island (SWI) is becoming too expensive, but has a great community feel overall**
- **Myth that everyone is wealthy in SWI persists**
- **Visible poverty is more noticeable**
- **Hidden poverty is still present**
- **Lack of municipal efforts on poverty and inclusion**
- **Not enough outreach to newcomers about programs and support**
- **Difficulty to reach those not connected to community organizations**
- **Lack of awareness of volunteer opportunities**
- **Youth in difficulty since the pandemic**
- **Seniors living in isolation from the community since the pandemic**
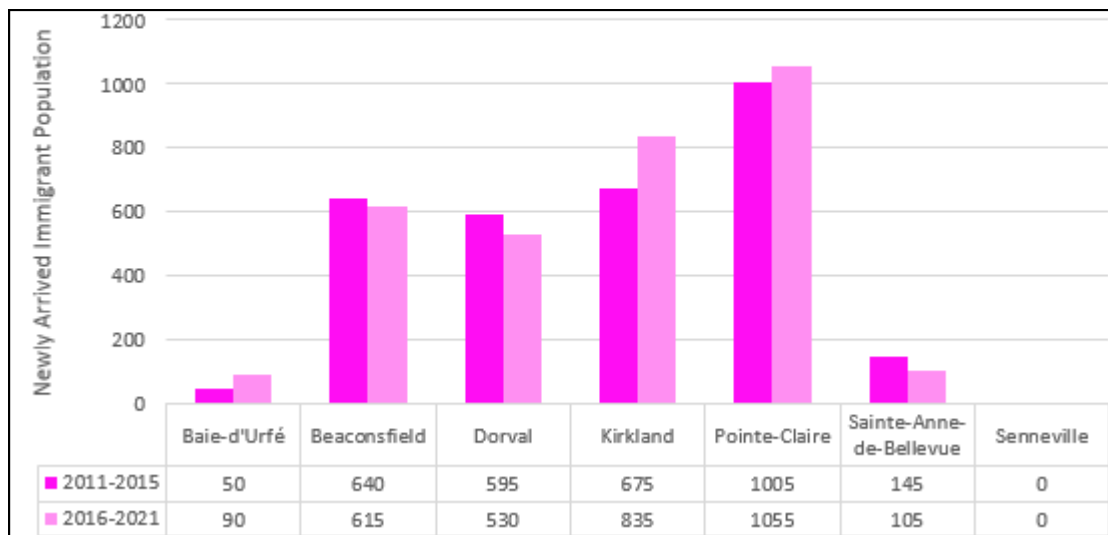
Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion

At a Glance

Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion are closely related to the current housing and food security crises as the financial challenges faced by residents of the southern West Island have resulted in more visible poverty, debunking the pervasive myth that poverty simply does not exist in the West Island.

Communities are struggling to meet the needs of a diverse population in order to have all residents feel supported and included. As Figure 6 shows, immigration levels have remained relatively steady or have increased in most municipalities. Community services have to meet a wider variety of needs, making access difficult and intensifying issues of social isolation and inequities.

Figure 6

Change in the Newly Arrived Immigrant Population in the Southern West Island

	Baie-d'Urfé	Beaconsfield	Dorval	Kirkland	Pointe-Claire	Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue	Senneville
2011-2015	50	640	595	675	1005	145	0
2016-2021	90	615	530	835	1055	105	0

Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion

Specific Needs

1. Demographic Diversity

- There is a need to meet the demands of an increasingly diverse group of residents who have different levels of interaction with, and understanding of, the community. As Figure 7 points out, immigrants arriving to the southern West Island are moving for economic reasons, as opposed to rejoining family for instance, and may not be familiar with the existing community resources available.

2. Community Services and Support

- Lack of awareness of available community services, such as food banks and social assistance programs, highlights the need for improved outreach and accessibility among priority populations.
- Residents emphasize the importance of inclusive community events and support networks to reduce social isolation and provide aid with dignity.

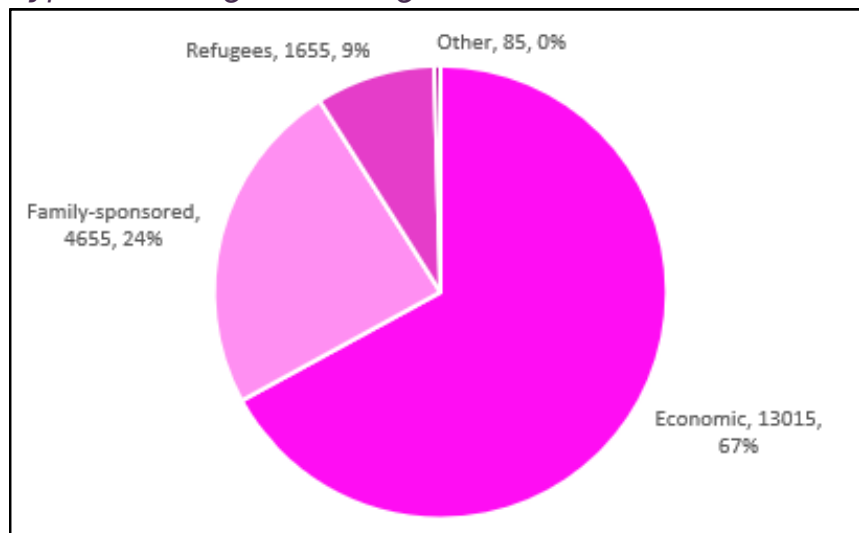**Figure 7**

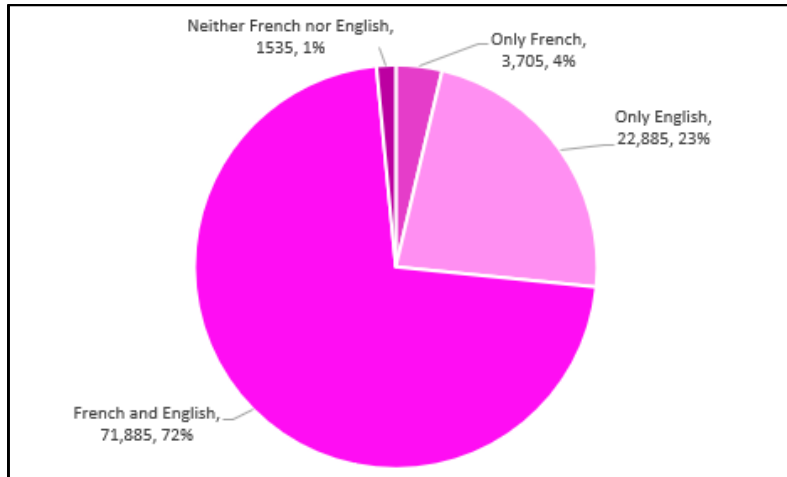*Type of Immigrant Living in the Southern West Island*

Figure 8

Knowledge of Official Languages in the Southern West Island

Pie chart data:
- Neither French nor English, 1535, 1%
- Only French, 3,705, 4%
- Only English, 22,885, 23%
- French and English, 71,885, 72%

3. Social Inclusion and Support

- Concerns about social inclusion extend to priority populations, including recently-arrived immigrants; seniors; people living with physical disabilities, mental health issues, and individuals experiencing homelessness. Priority populations face barriers to participation and access to resources.

- As Figure 8 shows, with more than a quarter of the population of the southern West Island unable to hold a conversation in both official languages, accessing services and feeling included in the community can be difficult.

- There is a need to encourage collaboration between community organizations, government agencies, and advocacy groups to address systemic barriers to social inclusion.

Great government initiatives have been put in place for social inclusion, but further efforts are needed for inclusion and participation.

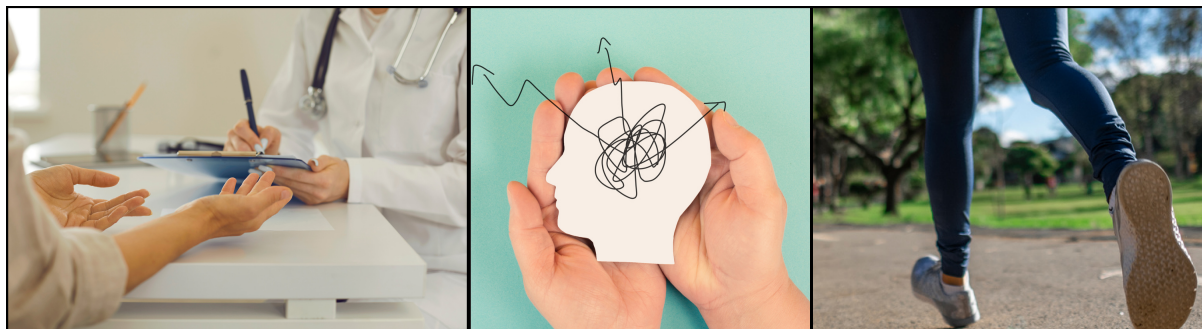- Participant

Health

Summary : Needs and Issues

- **Difficulty accessing healthcare due to long wait times and a lack of services**
- **Lack of follow-up and coordination between different services**
- **Significant rise in need for mental health support since the pandemic**
- **Lack of preventative healthcare and community care**
- **Need to increase community awareness of available services, especially for people experiencing social exclusion**

Health
At a Glance

The southern West Island faces health and healthcare challenges related to the access of health services whether it be from the health and social services system, for mental health support or for preventative health.

The COVID-19 pandemic was not only a health and public health crisis; it also produced negative impacts for many residents with regards to their physical and mental health, and their overall well-being long after the height of the pandemic was over.

An extremely fragile and strained Health and Social Services network that we are faced with today, was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic that actually magnified problems that were always there.

- Participant

Health
Specific Needs

1. Healthcare Accessibility
- Residents report difficulties to access healthcare due to long wait-times for appointments and surgeries.
- A lack of follow-up care and coordination between different healthcare services contribute to their challenges in accessing healthcare.
- The privatization of healthcare and shortages of healthcare professionals contribute to healthcare accessibility issues.

2. Mental Health Support
- There's a significant need for mental health services, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, but access to services is limited and wait-times are long.

3. Preventive Healthcare and Community Collaboration
- Participants express a lack of emphasis on preventive healthcare and this impacts personal and community well-being.
- Participants express a need to better inform and educate residents about healthy eating, mental health, and lifestyle choices.
- Community awareness about available healthcare services needs to be improved.

Seniors

Summary : Needs and Issues

- **Many seniors on fixed incomes are struggling to afford basic necessities**
- **Growing demand for affordable housing for seniors**
- **Growing additional medical expenses for seniors affected by the COVID-19 pandemic**
- **Social isolation compounded by mobility issues and lack of accessible public transit**
- **Lack of mental health services for seniors**
- **Need for intergenerational connections and participation in community decision-making**

Seniors

At a Glance

The well-being and support of seniors living in the southern West Island is of critical importance. The emphasis is placed on seniors living on fixed incomes and those living in isolation.

Important needs are to improve affordability and access to healthcare and social services; combat social isolation; and promote community engagement in order to enhance the well-being and quality of life of seniors.

According to Figure 2, 25.5% of the total population in the southern West Island living on a fixed income are 65 years and older. Also, based on Figure 2, 45% of all people 65 years and older living on a low income in the southern West Island live in Pointe-Claire, followed by Dorval at 27% and Beaconsfield at 10.5%.

Seniors
Specific Needs

1. Economic Insecurity and Affordability

- Seniors, especially those on fixed incomes, struggle to afford basic necessities such as food due to increasing costs and limited financial resources.
- Participants express that seniors are struggling to find suitable housing options within their budget, resulting in increased reliance on social support services amid the growing demand and affordability concerns of this population.

2. Health and Social Services

- Seniors are burdened with additional medical expenses, particularly for those who developed illnesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Access to healthcare services is also a concern, with limited availability and accessibility.

3. Social Isolation and Community Engagement

- Participants express that seniors often experience social isolation, compounded by mobility issues and a lack of accessible transportation options that are needed to remain physically and socially active. This isolation negatively impacts their mental and emotional well-being.

- Participants express the need for better mental health services tailored to the needs of seniors to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness. Social isolation among seniors is a prevalent issue, worsened by limited access to community activities and support services.

- There is an expressed need for intergenerational connections and participation in community decision-making.

> *The inclusion of seniors in all aspects of community life needs to be encouraged and facilitated.*
>
> — Participant

Family, Early Childhood, and Youth

Summary : Needs and Issues

- **Lack of accessible recreational activities for families**
- **Need for affordable and inclusive spaces, programs, parks**
- **Need for more inclusive, non-judgmental support networks for single parents, youth and families**
- **Need for holistic and multigenerational approaches to service delivery**
- **Need for initiatives that foster intergenerational connections and community cohesion**

Family, Early Childhood, and Youth

At a Glance

Education, youth development, community engagement, and accessibility to essential services are the interconnected challenges related to concerns facing families, children and youth in the southern West Island. As Figure 9 shows, family types are diverse in the southern West Island, as married couples with children represent less than half of all family types. Families are finding it increasingly difficult to connect with their each other, services and the community they live in.

Figure 9

Breakdown of Family Types in the Southern West Island
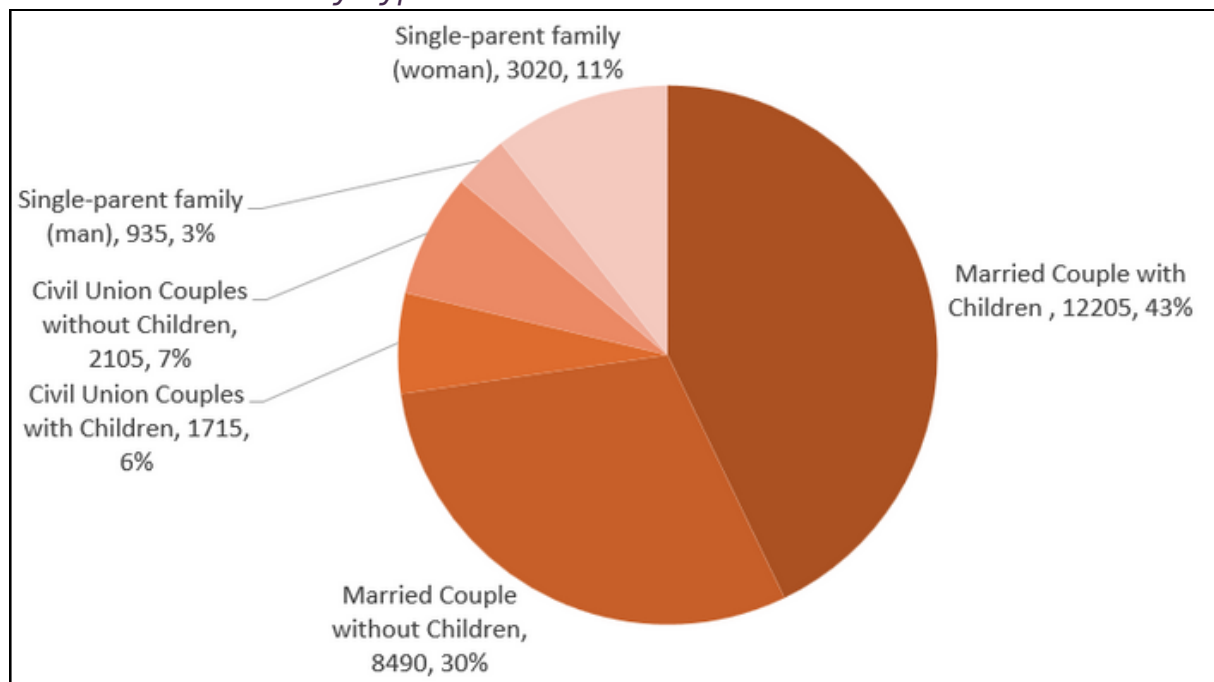
Family, Early Childhood, and Youth

Specific Needs

1. Community Engagement and Accessibility

- The availability and accessibility of recreational activities for individuals and families, particularly those with limited financial resources, emerged as a significant need.
- Residents emphasized the need for free or affordable programs, safe spaces for socializing, and inclusive amenities in parks and community centres.

2. Social Support Networks

- The importance of community support networks, including support groups for single parents and programs for youth and families, was emphasized.
- Participants express a need for safe and non-judgmental spaces where individuals can access resources and connect with others facing similar challenges.

3. Multigenerational Needs

- Recognizing the diverse needs of families and individuals across different age-groups, participants called for holistic and multigenerational approaches to service delivery. This includes initiatives that cater to the needs of children, youth, adults, and seniors, fostering intergenerational connections and community cohesion.

There needs to be more spaces to 'hangout' with family of all ages that is accessible and inclusive.

- Participant

Education

Summary : Needs and Issues

- **Lack of career guidance in high school, CEGEP and university, especially for non-academic careers**
- **Rising mental health issues among students since the pandemic: anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances**
- **Need for affirming environments in schools for students with diverse need, including autism**
- **Need to increase collaboration between schools and community organizations**
- **Lack of an inclusive and culturally-sensitive environments for students from diverse backgrounds**
- **Need for more open and accepting educational and community environments**
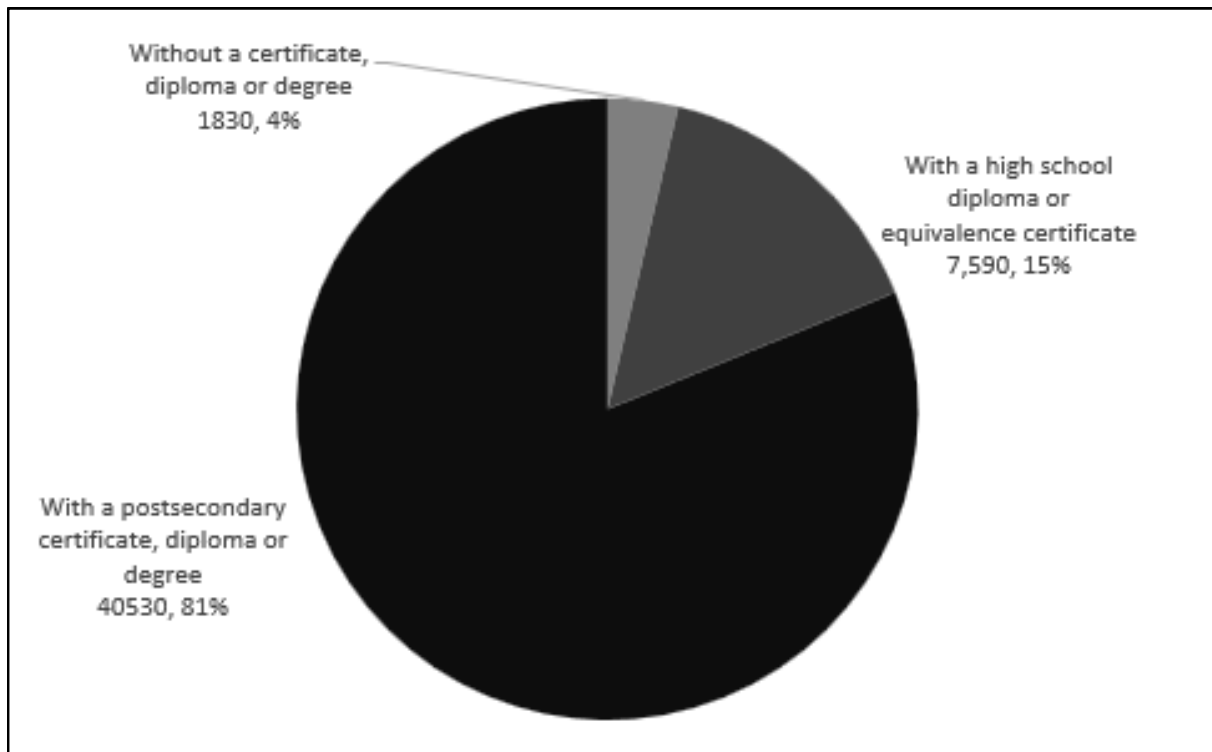
Education

At a Glance

Concerns regarding education in the southern West Island highlighted a range of challenges within the education system, including curriculum gaps, inadequate support for mental health issues, and the need for better collaboration between schools and community organizations.

The need for more inclusive, supportive, and effective educational environments is vital so all can student to thrive and reach their full potential, in and out of school.

Figure 10

Graduation Level Achieved by the Population (25 to 64 years old)
in the Southern West Island

Without a certificate, diploma or degree
1830, 4%

With a high school diploma or equivalence certificate
7,590, 15%

With a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree
40530, 81%

Education
Specific Needs

1. Curriculum and Career Guidance
- Calls for a greater focus on non-academic careers and trade education to provide diverse career pathways for students. As Figure 10 shows, while most residents do graduate, there are significant numbers who do not, possibly due to a lack of promotion of a variety of career options.
- Lack of comprehensive career guidance in schools, particularly at the high school, CEGEP, and university levels.

2. Support Needed: Mental Health and Well-being
- There is a need to address the challenges in the aftermath of the pandemic which contributed to a rise in mental health issues among students. Anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances were made worse by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Concerns exist about the integration of students with special needs and the impact on the overall classroom environment. There is a need for neuro-affirming environments in schools to support students with diverse needs, including autism.

### 3. School-Community Collaboration

- There is an expressed need to increase collaboration between schools and community organizations in order to address students' overall well-being.
- Participants express the need to promote the value of community workers in complementing the services offered by educational institutions.
- Participants express the need for better for greater openness and acceptance of the challenges faced by students within the school system and in the community.
- The lack of an inclusive and culturally-sensitive environments for students from diverse backgrounds can make attending school difficult.

Not every child knows what they want to be. They need better guidance getting there.

\- Participant

Transit
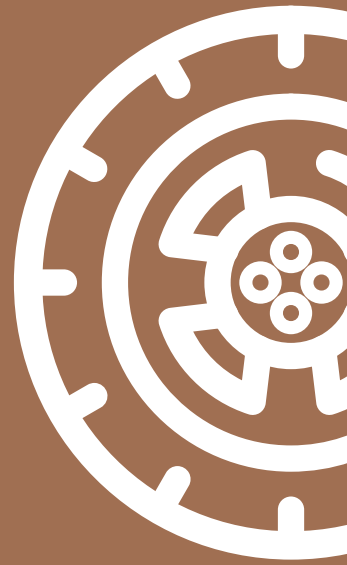
Summary : Needs and Issues

- **Need for frequent, available, and reliable public transit**
- **Lack of efficient inter-municipal public transportation options**
- **Transit infrastructure is not adequate for people with reduced mobility**
- **Not enough parking planned for the REM stations**
- **Need for more and adapted pedestrian infrastructure**
- **Need to promote sustainable transportation options**
- **Transit development plans that better meet community needs**

Transit

At a Glance

The diverse transportation needs of those living, working, and studying in the southern West Island underscore the need for comprehensive transportation-planning and infrastructure-development. Key needs relate to difficulties in accessing public transit; inadequate infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists; lack of accessibility for seniors and individuals with mobility issues; and concerns about traffic congestion and parking.

As Figure 11 demonstrates, the main mode of transportation to travel to work is by car, truck, or van, while the use of other modes of transit are significantly lower. It should be kept in mind that residents may have changed their commuting habits with the reality of hybrid or remote work after the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, commuters may use a combination of transportation options such as driving a car to a metro, bus or train station.

Figure 11

Main mode of transportation for commuting for the employed work population (15 years and over) of the Southern West Island
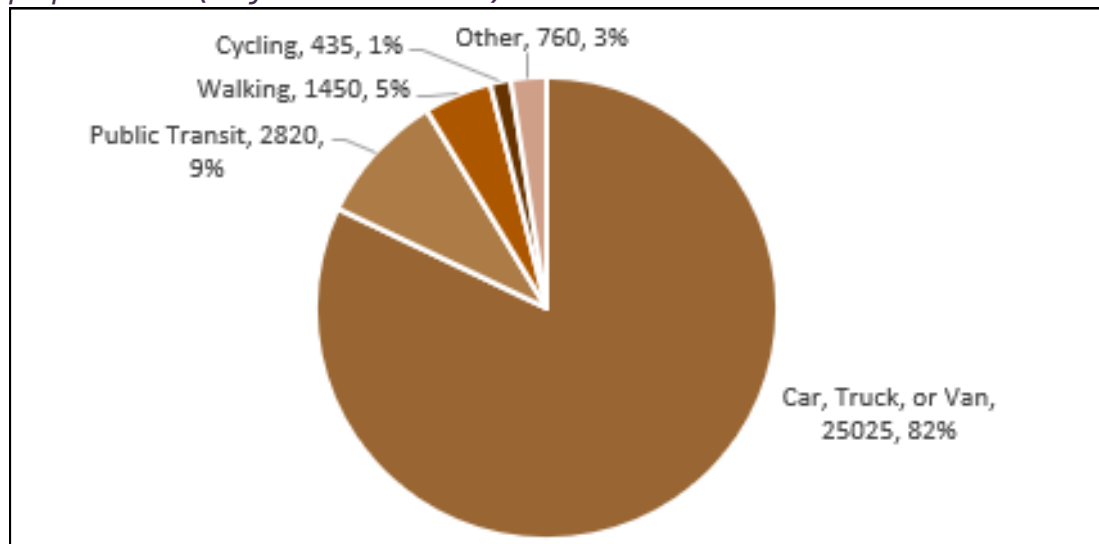
Transit
Specific Needs

1. Transportation Challenges
- There is need for public transit that is frequent, available, and reliable, especially during off-peak hours.
- Participants express a lack of efficient inter-municipal transportation options, resulting in lengthy commutes and inconvenience for residents, especially seniors and people living with reduced mobility.

2. Accessibility Concerns
- Limited accessible transit infrastructure, such as wheelchair-accessible walking paths and transit stations. For example, at the stations shown below, there is a lack of wheelchair-accessibility.
- Also, there is lack of parking planned for the stations of the Réseau Express Métropolitain (REM) in the West Island, which presents challenges for senior and individuals with mobility issues.
- Participants express a need for more pedestrian infrastructure, such as sidewalks and crosswalks, particularly in areas with heavy traffic.

3. Environmental Needs

- A need to promote the development of sustainable transportation options such as improvement of car-sharing programs and bike paths, encouragement of public transit use, and increase of electric-charging availability.

4. Communication and Community Engagement

- A need for adequate communication between the public, transportation agencies, and government entities. Inadequate communication leads to a lack of awareness of available transit services and developments of transit development plans.

> Transit options need to be easily accessible. Those with health and mobility issues might be unable to use public transport.
>
> - Participant

Environment

Summary : Needs and Issues

- **Need for stricter regulations to protect natural habitats and wildlife**
- **Need for sustainable development practices that limit urban sprawl**
- **More walkable neighbourhoods with public access to green space**
- **More inclusive programming and infrastructure to promote use of green spaces**
- **Need to promote alternatives to car use and alternative planning options for underused parking**
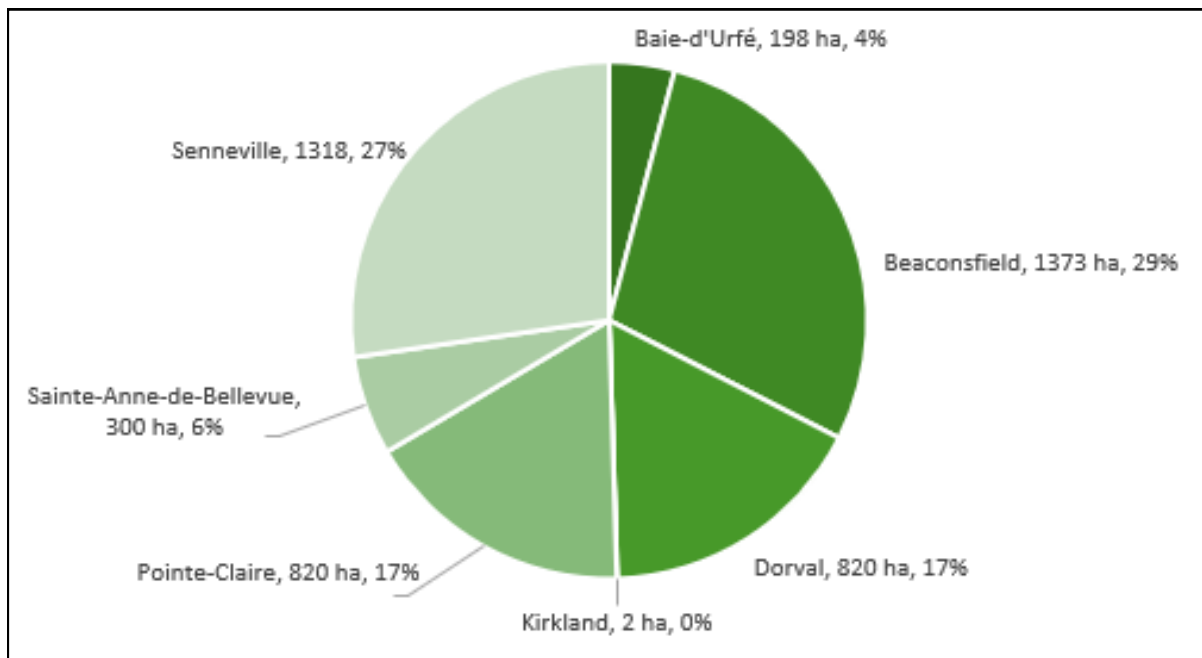
Environment

At a Glance

With a deep appreciation for both the natural environment and the social fabric present throughout the southern West Island, needs were raised related to the conservation of nature; the stewardship of the environment; and the expansion of the vibrant 'community-feel' for all residents living across this region.

There is an overall persistent need to make decisions that balance environmental conservation of existing natural spaces with urban and community development. The benefits for current and future generations to enjoy nature in inclusive and accessible ways lie in the balance.

Figure 12

Protected Area in the Southern West Island

**Note:** Source from l'Observatoire Grand Montréal.

Environment
Specific Needs

1. Environmental Conservation
- An important need to conserve the environment for biodiversity and community well-being was voiced.
- Participants express a need for stricter regulations to protect natural habitats and wildlife due to growing concerns about the loss of green spaces for urban development. As Figure 12 demonstrates, most municipalities of the southern West Island have less than 20% of their land designated as protected areas (Observatoire Grand Montréal, n.d.).

2. Sustainable Development for All
- Sustainable development practices are needed to limit the loss of natural habitats and green spaces to urban sprawl.
- There is an expressed need for development that prioritizes health, nature, and sustainability like walkable neighbourhoods with public access to green spaces.
- A larger variety of age-specific and inclusive programming and infrastructure in green spaces to encourage community engagement and outdoor activities for all.
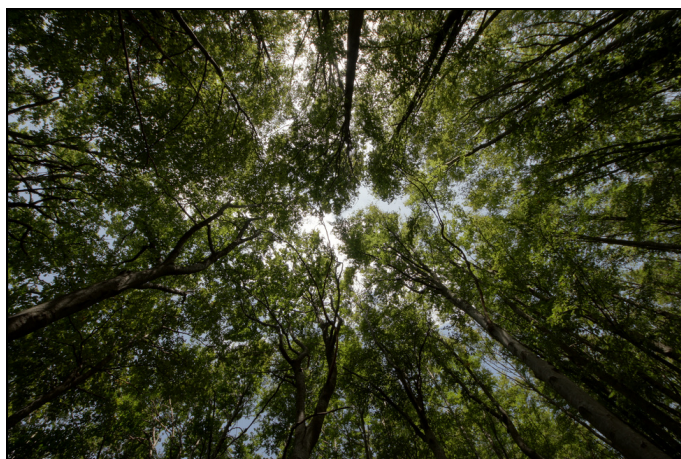
3. Transportation Infrastructure

- Challenges related to transportation infrastructure, including limited public transportation options, under-utilized parking spaces across the southern West Island, and a dependency on cars present a pressing need for alternatives to help reduce pollution and negative effects on nature and health.
- Residents highlight the need for improved access to public transportation to reduce dependency on cars and to promote sustainable transit options.

Things have not changed much, but the awareness has increased and citizens - who are now the best and almost only custodians of nature - are now understanding that they have a lot of power and say on environmental issues.

- Participant

PART 4

Takeaways for the Future
Conclusion

Needs: Accessibility, Affordability, Inclusivity

In each of the Areas of Interest, there is profound sense that the community of the southern West Island is not as equitable as it can be. Issues related to the accessibility of services, the increasing cost of housing and food, and efforts to address a growing, diverse population with different backgrounds and abilities needs to be addressed.

Addressing the COVID-19 Aftermath

The COVID-19 pandemic produced new needs and added pressures to pre-existing needs that remain unmet. The impacts are widespread across the southern West Island, from food security to the additional strain on community and social services, as well as on the daily lives of seniors, families, and youth. There is a need to make sure that no one - especially in priority populations – is left behind in the years to come due to negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Desire for Citizen Engagement

Residents expressed a strong desire to participate actively in the decision-making process in each of the Areas of Interest discussed. Whether through becoming more aware of the issues and planning process; voicing their concerns; or being empowered to work together with community organizations, policy makers and agencies, residents are motivated to make the southern West Island better, for all.

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