

CBEL Project: Community Kitchen Assessment in the Kerrisdale and Marpole Area

Final Project Report

Group 22

LFS 350

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Executive Summary

A community kitchen is a place where people get together, prepare food, learn nutritional knowledge, and improve culinary skills. The community-based learning project conducted by the Group 22 from the course LFS 350 at the UBC was about the community kitchen assessment in the Kerrisdale and Marple area. The objectives of this project were to evaluate the facilities and programs available at privately operated community kitchens in the target area, and to understand the challenges faced by these community kitchens with regard to food safety and accessibility aspects. Questions that were expected to be answered by the findings of this project included ‘What equipment and programs are available at community kitchens visited?’, ‘Are community partners interested in expanding the usage of the kitchen?’, and ‘What would allow the community kitchens to be used more often?’ The findings of this project will be potentially used by the City of Vancouver to further improve the current status of community kitchens.

There were two community kitchens participated in this project, and both of them are religious organizations. The consent for participation was acquired from community partners. Raw data were collected during the visits to community kitchens by conducting standardized survey and making observations, and were analyzed using thematic method.

The results of the project showed that both community kitchens were holding similar types of programs including both internal and external usages. However, Kitchen 1 had better equipment than Kitchen 2, while Kitchen 2 generally accepted more commercial use for financial purpose. Both community partners were interested in expanding the kitchen usage. The major improvement expected by Kitchen 1 was to create the opportunity to regularly communicate with other community kitchens and foodbanks in the same area to benefit more community members. Kitchen 2 would focus more on the improvement of equipment in the future.

It has been noticed that the lack of funding was the major barrier preventing community kitchens from rapid development. The lack of funding could affect the availability of programs and equipment at community kitchens, resulting in potential food safety and accessibility issues.

We would recommend the initiation of a community kitchen council between community kitchens and foodbanks in the same geographical area. The council could facilitate the communication between organizations and provide the opportunity for small organizations to seek for support (such as financial support) to improve their programs and facilities, eventually achieving the goal of community development.

Introduction

Our Community Based Experiential Learning project was about the community kitchen assessment in the Marpole and Kerrisdale areas (Figure 1 and 2). A community kitchen is a place where people get together, prepare food, learn nutritional knowledge, and improve culinary skills (Greater Vancouver Foodbank, n.d.). Kerrisdale area is primarily a residential area that is centered around the 41st Avenue, between the Maple St and Blenheim St, and it is the second wealthiest neighborhood in Canada with an average household annual income of \$1,277,431 (City of Vancouver, 2016a; Canadian business, 2014). Marpole area is also primarily a residential area that “slopes from Oakridge into Fraser River” (City of Vancouver, 2016b). Generally, the population of the Marpole area spend 20% more of their income on necessities, such as food, clothing and shelter, than the average level of Vancouver, with a 7.1% unemployment rate (Statistics Canada, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2011).

Food safety is defined as “actions aimed at ensuring that all food is as safe as possible...covers the entire food chain, from production to consumption” (World Health Organization, n.d.). Food accessibility is recognized as “sources for healthy food are easy to get to at a manageable distance from home or work, using affordable and convenient personal or public transportation” (Minnesota Food Charter, n.d.). Knowing the importance of community kitchen in providing meals, any potential food safety related issues in the community kitchen would affect a large population of a community (Greater Vancouver FoodBank society, n.d). Food safety could also be significantly affected by equipment conditions and programs available at community kitchens (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

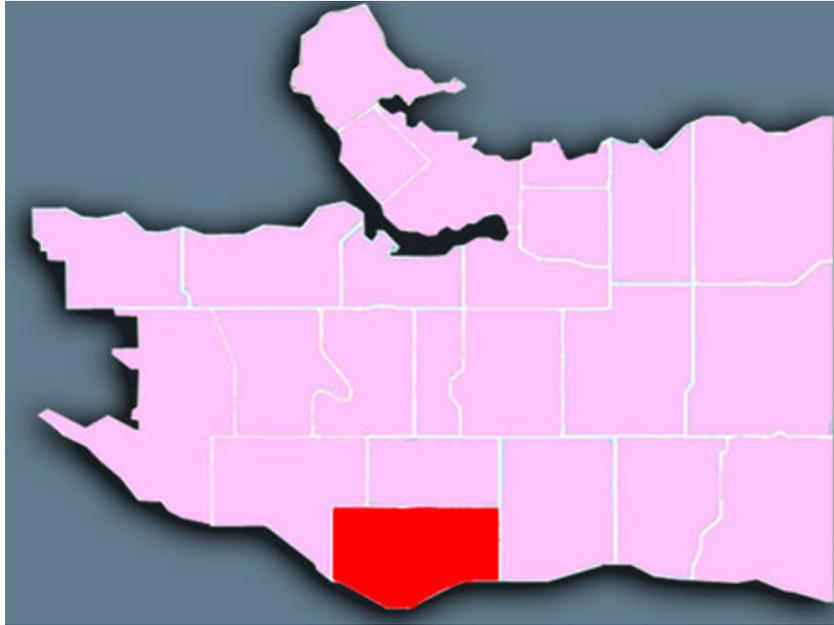


Figure 1. Marpole Neighbourhood, Vancouver, BC.
(Source:<http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/marpole-community-plan-open-house-display-boards-2012-may.pdf>)

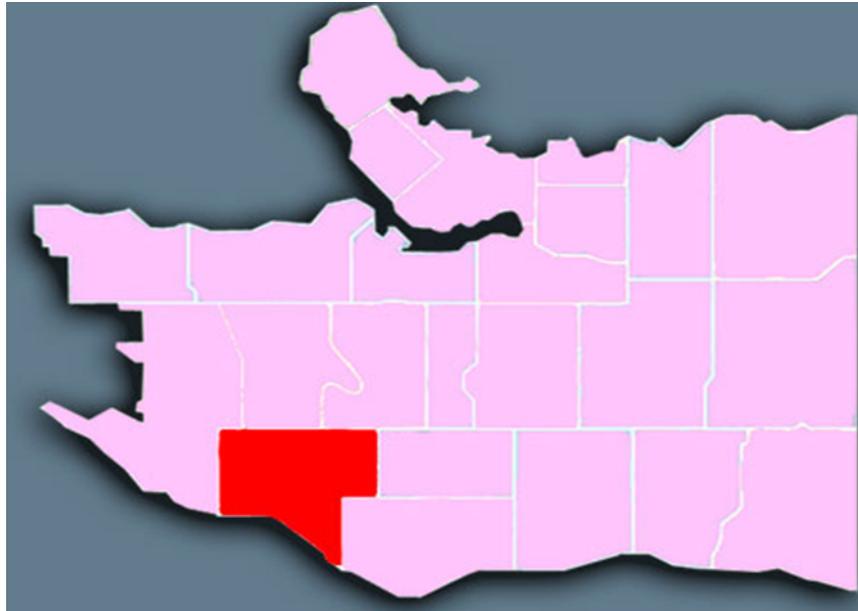


Figure 2. Kerrisdale Neighbourhood, Vancouver, BC.
(Source:https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vancouver_Kerrisdale.jpg)

System diagram



Major interactions: (1) On the city’s level, federal and provincial agencies, through the City’s governance, control and affect the kitchen’s food safety and programs. Policies and inspections, for example, have big impact on the behaviors of the kitchen when it comes to keeping up with the standards provided by the City.

(2) Farms and food retailers and food banks located in the City are the major sources of donations (both financial and physical items) that the community kitchen depends on to function on a daily basis.

(3) Community stakeholders also influences the operation of the community kitchen by providing resources (such as money) and influencing the development of programs.

(4) Grocery stores and bakeries are key food donors to the community kitchen.

(5) Community members as the main participants in events and programs at the community kitchen could largely influence the development of programmings, and acquire food resources, nutritional knowledge, and cooking skills from the community kitchen.

Figure 3. The food system diagram of a community kitchen including the interactions with the community and the City of Vancouver.

Objectives and inquiry questions

The objectives of this project included:

- To evaluate the facilities and programs available at privately operated community kitchens in Kerrisdale and Marpole areas;
- To understand the challenges faced by these community kitchens with regards to food safety food accessibility in Kerrisdale and Marpole areas.

Inquiry questions included:

- What equipment and programs are available at the community kitchens visited?
- What would allow the community kitchens to be used more often? (knowing that most of their programs are offered once a week)
- Are community partners interested in expanding the usage of the facility (dining hall and kitchen)?

Methods

Procedures

Before we started contacting potential community partners, we generated a list of community organizations with functioning kitchen facilities in the Kerrisdale and Marpole areas, by searching online and visiting the community in person. We contacted them by email to briefly introduce our project and invite them to participate as community partners. After obtaining their agreement of participation, we scheduled meetings with them and proceeded to conduct in-person interviews at the kitchens.

Data collection approach

Data were collected through standardized surveys and on-site observations upon visiting. The survey was provided by the LFS 350 teaching team and consisted of qualitative and quantitative survey questions.

Data Analysis

We used thematic analysis after obtaining data from our community partners. We compiled data in tables and compared the differences and similarities. Therefore, we were able to find comparative patterns between these kitchens, allowing us to have a better understanding of the current status of the kitchen and provide constructive advice for community partners.

Ethical considerations

For the ethical considerations, the consent for participation was acquired from community partners before we conducted our research. The privacy and confidentiality of community partners were emphasized by reducing the exposure of device containing the data, and non-identifying names of community partners in the presentation and report.

Results

There were two community kitchens participating in the project, Kitchen 1 (Figures 4a and 4b) located in the Kerrisdale area and Kitchen 2 located in the Marpole area. Both of them are religious organizations. Observations regarding equipment condition taken in both community kitchens during visits were shown in Table 1. While both kitchens were identified as

commercial type of kitchens, Kitchen 1 generally had better equipment than Kitchen 2 did. The difficulty in upgrading the equipment was identified by Kitchen 2 as the lack of funding. With the internal usage as the primary purpose, both kitchens accepted external groups to use the kitchen. However, while Kitchen 2 might have deficiency in their equipment, they generally accepted more groups to use the kitchen.

Kitchen managers' interests in future improvements were discussed during in-person interviews (Table 2). Kitchen 1 emphasized their interest in cooperating with other community kitchens and foodbanks in the same area to facilitate communication between organizations in order to develop better programs to benefit more community members. Kitchen 2 mainly expected to upgrade their equipment, such as the domestic fridge, in the future.

For Kitchen 1, community kitchen promotions had been identified as the factor that could support the kitchen to be used more. Because of the long-time operation, good equipment, experienced and skillful volunteers, qualified chef, well-developed programs, the partnership with small local businesses such as local bakeries, and the unique setting of the eating space (round tables with 10 seats at each table) adjacent to the kitchen, Kitchen 1 would not focus on the upgrade of equipment or the improvement of current programs to expand the kitchen usage. However, Kitchen 2 considered the upgrade of their equipment and the funding for the payment for volunteers as the major factors that would support the expansion of current kitchen usage.



Figure 4a. The equipment available at Kitchen 1.



Figure 4b. The equipment available at Kitchen 1.

Table 1. The equipment condition, kitchen usage, and available programs at Kitchen 1 and Kitchen 2.

Category	Kitchen 1	Kitchen 2
Kitchen Type	Commercial	Commercial
Sink Type (Number of Basins)	5 Basins	2 Basins
Dishwasher	Industrial	Industrial
Current Condition of Equipment	In very good condition.	The dishwasher that had been used for 50 years was recently replaced; the refrigerator currently used was domestic.
Kitchen is used by	Staff; community members along with staff and/or volunteers (internal); community members along with staff and/or volunteers from other organizations (external); community members without staff presence.	Staff; community members along with staff and/or volunteers (internal); community members along with staff and/or volunteers from other organizations (external); community members without staff presence.
Number of Groups using the Kitchen	Currently 4	Currently 5
Number of hours the kitchen is used weekly	15 hours for only community meal; maximum of 40 hours when holding other events	>30 hours
Purpose of use / Available Programs	Cooking classes; group cooking (eg. jam making session); for preparing food for groups that meet on-site; for large functions/events; for businesses or for-profit enterprises (eg. external chef	Cooking classes; group cooking; for preparing food for groups that meet on-site; for large functions/events; for businesses or for-profit enterprises; community meal.

	training session); community meal.	
Who has access to the meals provided by the kitchen	The general public (everyone is eligible); wheelchair accessible; public on-street parking.	The general public (everyone is eligible); wheelchair accessible; public on-street parking.

Table 2. Interests in future improvements of Kitchen 1 and Kitchen 2.

Category	Kitchen 1	Kitchen 2
Interest in Future Improvement	Yes; interested in building up a council involving different community kitchens and foodbanks to create dialogues and facilitate communication between organizations, in order to benefit more clients.	Yes; interested in equipment upgrading, such as replacing the domestic fridge currently used.
Interest in holding more community programs	Maybe	Yes
Interest in providing the kitchen space for community members trying to start a food-based business with a social mandate	Maybe	Yes
Interest in offering / renting the kitchen space to non-profits or local farmers to store food	Maybe	Yes

Discussion

The main objective was to conduct observations and assess the infrastructure of participating community kitchens through survey and on-site analysis. Through the data collected, answers and solutions to inquiry questions could be formed, while an understanding of the challenges faced by community kitchens in regards to food safety and accessibility could also be addressed. By analyzing the information gathered, experiences, key concepts from LFS 350, community based knowledge, and academic literature, significant connections, interpretations, and limitations and improvements could be drawn on the project.

Interpretation of Findings

Both participating community kitchens took an important role in the community as they provided free meals and a variety of programs for community members, facilitating the development of the whole community. However, the financial status, majorly the funding available for community kitchens, significantly influence the available equipment and programs at each community kitchen (Barbolet et al., 2005; National Sustainable Agriculture and Coalition, 2014).

It has been shown by the results that the available funding a kitchen has may significantly affect the condition of equipment owned by the kitchen. Because of the lack of funding, Kitchen 2 generally accepted more groups to use the kitchen for financial purposes, while there was some deficiency in equipment. When underfunded kitchens might have to increase commercial usage to acquire funds to cover expenses, the deficiency in their equipment could cause food safety issues, and the excessive use of equipment would require more frequent maintenance, resulting in higher total costs (Byrd et al., 2013; Hollyer et al., 2000). Good operating conditions and sufficient capacity of equipment are significant to ensure the food safety in a community kitchen,

and enough funding is one of key factors to help obtain upgraded equipment in order to provide healthy meals and better service for community members (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2015; National Sustainable Agriculture and Coalition, 2014).

Other significant findings were the differences in needs of the kitchen in regards to expansion and growth. In kitchen 1, marketing and advertisement is needed to increase attendance and development of programs, while in kitchen 2, funding for upgrading equipment such as changing the old domestic fridge into an industrial fridge would provide additional space and storage to increase production. The current expansion goals were also closely related to the funding and expenses of each kitchen.

The results also provided insight into other factors, such as the location and transportation accessibility, that could contribute to the accessibility and usage of the kitchen. According to the results, both Kitchen 1 and Kitchen 2 were easily accessible to the general public, and the community meals were provided for all participants without any requirements of eligibility by both kitchens, ensuring food accessibility. Based on the information obtained during interviews with community partners, factors such as the population density in the community and transportation accessibility contribute to attendance numbers. Another factor within the scope of the community kitchen services that contribute to growth would be the variety and number of programs offered at each location. In order to provide needs that different visitors may need, increasing variety and time accessibility may be advantageous.

Project Significance and Relationship to Research Focus

By applying the principles of the Asset Based Community Development, a method that required establishing a personal relationship with and having a deep understanding of the

participating community kitchens was used to cooperatively conducting the kitchen evaluation and addressing issues and concerns (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Having group members and project participants from various disciplines, while incorporating community and academic based knowledge and sources, allowed the project to be attempted and accomplished from a trans-disciplinary approach.

For this project, the information gathered would supplement existing research conducted by previous LFS 350 groups on the assessment of community kitchens for the Vancouver Food Strategy, and findings of this project would also be potentially used by the City of Vancouver to address further developments of community kitchens. However, the geographical area and the focus group of community kitchens were different from previous studies, providing more complete and comprehensive information on the current status of community kitchens in Vancouver.

Connections Between Findings and Literature

Previous studies on the status of community kitchens also showed the significant effect of funding on the community kitchen operation. According to Barbolet et al. (2005), a community kitchen might only be able to receive funding in a limited time period, which might result in instability of the financial status of the community kitchen and negatively affect the availability of programs and equipment owned by the community kitchen (Barbolet et al., 2005; National Sustainable Agriculture and Coalition, 2014).

In terms of food accessibility, generally household's access of safe and nutritious food is not only dependent on the quantify of food available, but also relying on the household income and the physical accessibility (such as the location of a food retailer or a community food

program) (Premanandh, 2011; Bertrand et al., 2008). However, while the household income is not an issue in most community kitchens because free meals are provided for the general public, the accessibility of the community organizations would be a problem preventing community members from obtaining safe and nutritious food (Barbolet et al., 2005). Previous assessment of nutritional value of food provided showed that although nutritious and safe foods were essential for the successful operation of a community kitchen, the funding provided was not enough to support the kitchen to regularly purchase these foods (Barbolet et al., 2005). It is suggested that the government should readdress the area where the population has the difficulty acquiring healthy and safe food, and the community should also support the initiation and development of a variety of food programs such as community kitchens and farmers' market to further solve the food safety and accessibility issues within the community (Bertrand et al., 2008).

Limitations

Throughout the project, assignment boundaries and confines were encountered that limited the research and data results. One limitation was the use of survey questions being the primary form of data documentation. Most answers to the survey were quantitative and statistical in form, restricting answers to fixed choices, advantageous when implemented in diagrams or charts; explanations, descriptions, and details were forgone in numerous questions. Further to that, we were not allowed to ask questions additional to these listed in the survey. For future improvement, the use of specific or descriptive questions in relation to qualitative results could be incorporated.

The low participation rate of community partners (thus a small sample size) in the designated areas was another major limitation. By having a larger sample size, results would be

more representative. Community partners that cooperated during the project were from a religious background, and thus having additional participants from other disciplines would also provide supplementary insight from other perspectives. The recommended and suggested improvements could be accomplished if additional time was provided, along with more efficient time allocation and scheduling. Short term study results limited further possibilities for additional meetings with community partners and the participation as volunteers of their organizations.

Conclusion

From this project, we found that different community kitchens might have different programs and facilities. The major findings included that the equipment condition at Kitchen 1 was better than that at Kitchen 2 in terms of the equipment type (industrial or domestic) and the general maintenance of equipment, while Kitchen 2 generally accepted more groups to use the kitchen for financial purpose. The lack of funding was the major reason why Kitchen 2 could not upgrade their equipment and was trying to acquire extra funds through the commercial programs held by the kitchen. The deficiency of equipment and the excessive use of the kitchen could lead to potential food safety hazards. The low capacity of equipment could also result in the kitchen's limited capacity to serve community members, leading to food accessibility issues. The limitations of this project majorly included the limited type of survey questions utilized, the small sample size (low participation rate of community organizations), and the time limit as a short term study. Further research should be conducted on more community kitchens in the Kerrisdale and Marpole area in order to generate more representative findings.

In terms of the recommendation, the establishment of a community kitchen council in the same community or between adjacent communities would be beneficial. The initiation of the

council has been mentioned by one of our community partners as well. The council would provide the opportunity for different organizations to come together and build a common vision of the community development. Smaller community kitchens or those having a lack of equipment or funding would also have the opportunity to seek help from larger organizations in order for better community kitchen development.

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Appendix: Critical Reflection

Student 1: Before having a thorough understanding of this course and the project, I expected this course to be similar to LFS 250 in which we had assigned community partners. However, after the first two weeks of this term, I realized the difficulty of this project majorly in terms of seeking for community partnerships all by ourselves. This process was much more challenging than what I expected because of the large amount of group work, the difficulty in finding community partners, and the amount of time required for the interviews with community partners and the completion of assignments. The most challenging part was the group work because all four of us had very different schedules, causing a lot of scheduling issues when we tried to have group meetings. To resolve those problems, we managed to have online meetings instead of in-person ones, and asked the TA for advice. The flexible learning section also provided us with the opportunity to complete group assignments together, meet with community partners, and meet up to generate reflections on project progress and group work in order to achieve a common goal. The CBEL project was valuable because it gave us the opportunity to meet and work with community partners and fellow classmates to better understand the community we live in, and to develop the cooperation and problem solving skills at the same time.

Student 2: During the project, many opportunities to work independently as a group consisted the majority of our time. Through these interactions and experiences, many challenges were faced in order to efficiently allocate the resources to successfully complete our assignments. Although these obstacles limited our potential, as a group, we accomplished many things together that were tremendous in nature. By utilizing Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) when

approaching community partners, this initiated better responses and deeper understanding of each organization. Many assumptions and speculations in regards to a community partner would be irrelevant or improved upon, therefore, by the method in which we conducted our meetings, better results could be gathered and documented. The understanding that we developed as a group, a realization that the community based partner is more knowledgeable from their experiences, allowed us to incorporate and provide the correct insight to further each other's goals. From these learning experiences, we were able to see how we can fit in and provide assistance to accomplish what the organizations needed, as well as to receive constructive data improving our results. By working together and responding as a cohesive unit, we were able to align our approach to employ ABCD. Therefore, I learned that although we may falter in some areas of group work, we may also find successes. Areas such as presenting, ABCD, reaching out to community partners, gathering additional information, or covering for each other's work were some things that we accomplished successfully as a group.

Student 3: This project gave me a clearer concept of the community. At the beginning, we developed our methods without a deep understanding of the community, and a lot of modifications to our methods were made during our project progress. For the future project, in order to be more time efficient, we should get to know the community before taking actions. During in-person visits, I learned that how the community kitchen was operated and the role of the kitchens in the community. It was also interesting to visit different facilities in different areas and figure out the differences and similarities between these kitchens. In the lectures, we were introduced the principles of the ABCD that was used in project. The CBEL experience allowed us to put the theoretical knowledge into practices. The knowledge we learned from lectures also

facilitated our understanding of the community and assisted with the development of community-based approaches. The flexible learning sessions provided us time for visiting community partners and meeting up to discuss our project. For the project, we faced challenges to have group meetings because of scheduling conflicts. But by working with the whole group to resolve problems, I've developed my problem solving and communication skills in this CBEL project.

Student 4: At first, it was hard to imagine what it was going to be in this course. I didn't understand most of great ideas and ideologies around the course, such as community based experiential learning (CBEL) and asset based community development (ABCD). But it was all okay till I was told that each group was going to find their community partners to do the project with, meaning that we had to find partners doing great work around community kitchens without much assistance from the professor and TAs. From doing the project independently, with my group, I learned a lot in terms of how much you have to invest in making sure that the whole group meets deadline, for example. The flexible learning played a big role in giving us time to strategize the group's moves and the group was able to meet partners during those time slots. Thanks to the course, now I think I have what it takes to be a good group member and I am looking forward to using the skills I gained in other courses and my future career. On the other side, it became clear to me how much people involved in solving problems in the society really want to have university students be part of the struggle, if it is true that they are the future leaders. For me, it was important to have a better understanding of my community because I am graduating next year, which means I am going to be a "full time" community member.