

Simpson-Ogden - Thunder Bay, Ontario

Simpson-Ogden was named for two citizens who assumed civic prominence in the 1800s and is the second oldest residential neighbourhood in Thunder Bay. Simpson Street developed as the area's first business district in the early 1900s and Ogden Street has been the site of community park programs for more than 80 years. Travelling north to south on Simpson Street provides a glimpse of the neighbourhood's ethnic and socio-economic diversity. The street itself is often heavy with traffic and widens to four lanes inside the Simpson-Ogden neighbourhood. Its commercial buildings are mostly two and three stories high, often with apartments on the second and third floors.

Though once a thriving business location, Simpson Street is now showing evidence of decline. Although an estimated 175 businesses remain, many have closed, leaving behind boarded up doors and windows. The Simpson-Ogden Business Improvement Association (BIA) planted trees and installed benches and hanging flower baskets in an effort to improve the neighbourhood's appeal, but the unkempt appearance of many of the buildings embodies Simpson Street's struggle to find a better footing in Thunder Bay's modern business community.

The remainder of Simpson-Ogden is made up of residential properties. About two-thirds of the housing stock is comprised of small, single homes; more than half of these were built before 1946. Some larger houses have been converted into multi-unit apartments. Though many properties are tidy and well kept, residents are very concerned about the dozen or so vacant, burned out or boarded-up houses sprinkled throughout the neighbourhood. Besides the neighbourhood's business and housing elements, Simpson-Ogden has a public pool, community centre and two elementary schools. Other than the school yards and play areas adjacent to the pool and community centre, the neighbourhood has no other parks or public green spaces.

Simpson-Ogden has approximately 2,500 households and an estimated population of 5,000. At the beginning of the ANC project, the few statistics available which helped to describe the residents of the neighbourhood were extrapolated from three Census tracts that most closely fit the Simpson-Ogden boundaries. Low income levels increase from north to south in the neighbourhood, from 16.3 to 22.8 to 35.7 percent, compared with a regional rate of 11.4 percent.

The neighbourhood is mainly populated by the descendents of European immigrants (Polish, Ukrainian, British, German, Finnish, Dutch, and Italian) and by a high proportion of Aboriginals.