



TORAKE
JAPANESE CUISINE

Restaurant Review &
Neighbourhood Briefing





Torake: What it is, Why it matters and Where did it come from?

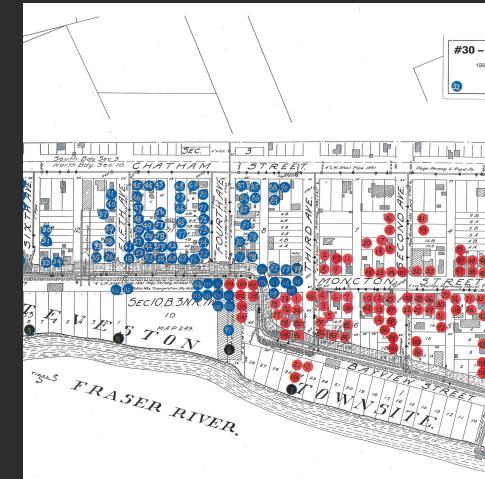
In 2023, Richmond welcomed another Japanese restaurant, Torake. Torake, like many other restaurants in Richmond, is a small local business that aimed to serve high quality food that is reflective of the culture of Richmond. The owners of the restaurant grew up in Vancouver, bringing strong community roots and a deep connection to the cultural identity of Richmond to their cuisine. The restaurant is a reminder of the long standing impact Japanese culture has in Richmond and how changing demographics have shaped modern eating habits. I selected Torake because the restaurant peaked my curiosity; it's a modern and pricey Japanese restaurant that opened in a random suburban corner plaza with low foot traffic and only houses surrounding it for multiple blocks, nonetheless it flourished. The history of Japanese cuisine goes back to 1880–1930, when Steveston, a part of Richmond, was still a fishing town made up of a majority of Japanese immigrants. Post World War 2, the Japanese population has shrunk significantly in Richmond, however, their heritage and cuisine has always been prominent in Richmond. I want understand how and why Japanese cuisine has continued to flourish in contrast to the population of ethnic Japanese in Richmond and to explore the demographics of the restaurant, my neighbourhood and the areas around me to better understand why Torake has become so popular!



Sushi Platter from Torake



Steveston in the 1940's looking West on Moncton



Map of Steveston, aka 'Japan Town', blue and red dots mark Japanese businesses and residences



Entrance of Torake



Torake Demographics: Population Change

Let's start by looking at the total population change of Torake's corresponding Census Track, the area around Torake and of Richmond as a whole. These will give us a general idea of how Richmond is growing and if the area's around Torake has seen any extraordinary growth. We can observe in Figure 1 that the Total Population dropped in 2021 compared to 2016, this may be because during COVID numbers were under-reported. Comparing 2016 and 2024, we see slight population growth.

The 2km radius around CT0143.04 aims to capture the demographics of the immediate neighbourhoods around Torake, which hopefully provides insights into the restaurants local customer base. In Figure 2, we see the same population trends as Figure 1. Something to note, is that within walking distance, there is only one other restaurant, which means that Torake already serves as primary dining location for the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Finally, in Figure 3, we can observe that across Richmond there has been a steadily increasing population. Let's dive a bit deeper into the ethnic backgrounds of those in Richmond, so we can better understand the restaurant demographics.

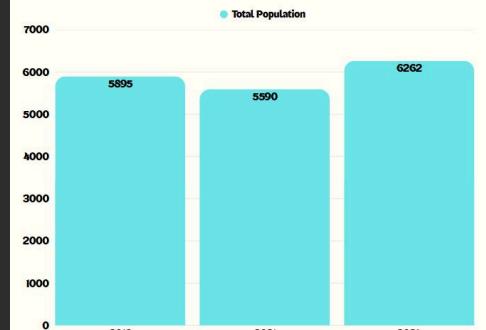


Fig 1. Total Population Change in CT0143.04

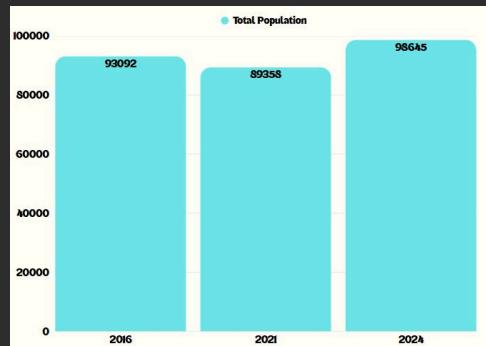


Fig 2. Total Population Change in 2km radius around CT0143.04

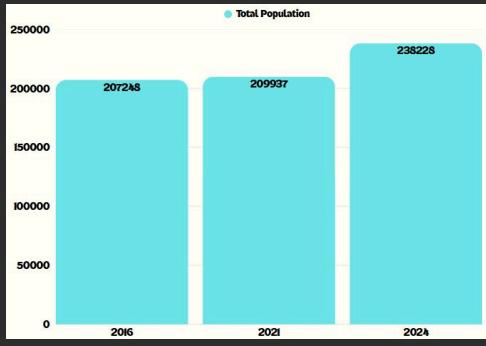
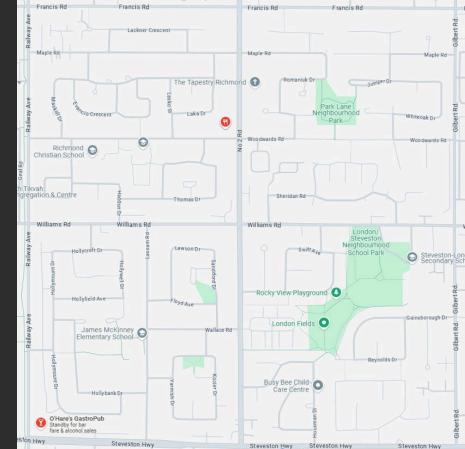


Fig 3. Total Population Change in Richmond

Corner plaza's like those in Figure 4, where Torake resides, are a rarity in Richmond. It's clear that the lack of nearby dining options may also play a role in determining their demographics.

If population across Richmond continues to increase due to urban sprawl, the value of a walkable restaurant rises leading to potentially more restaurant goers.

With the information provided thus far, it's possible that it's missing key demographics as it doesn't capture commuting behavior from the bus stops or access from the main roads.



Map of area surrounding Torake, highlighting restaurants



Fig 4. Photo of Corner Plaza with Torake



Torake Demographics: Ethnocultural Population

At a glance, we can observe from Figure 1, that Richmond has a majority visible minority population. This population primarily consists of those identifying as Asian origin (74.8%) and secondarily, having European origin (25.4%).

Something interesting to note, is that the ethnic origins that make up Richmond are the inverse of the rest of BC.

I chose to look at the Total Visible Minority population and hone in on the Chinese and Japanese communities.

After exploring the data, It's clear that East Asians, especially Chinese, make up most of Richmond's population. From Figures 2 and 3, the Chinese population outnumbers all others in Richmond.

I wanted to include the Japanese population even though it is significantly smaller because Torake is Japanese and I want to understand if there's a cultural or relevant Japanese population that contributes to its demographic.

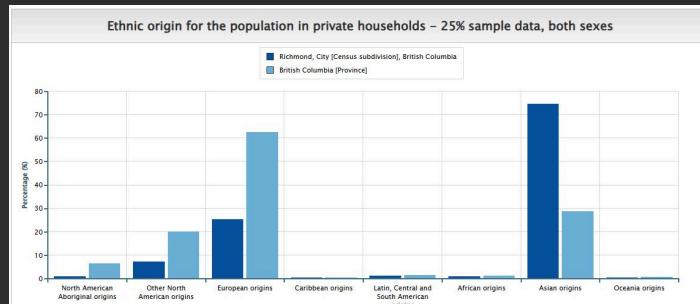


Fig 1. Ethnic Origins for the Population of Richmond and BC

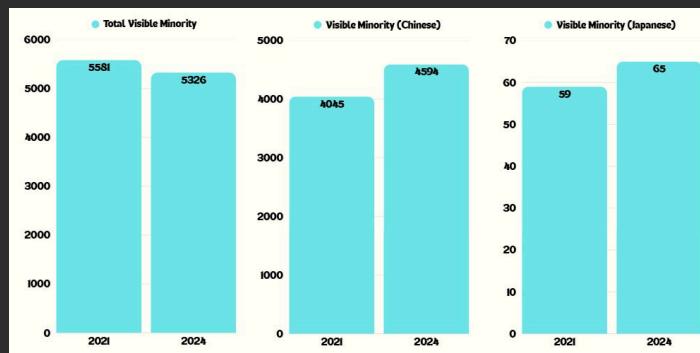


Fig 2. Total Visible Minority Status, Visible Chinese Minority and Visible Japanese Minority in CT0143.04

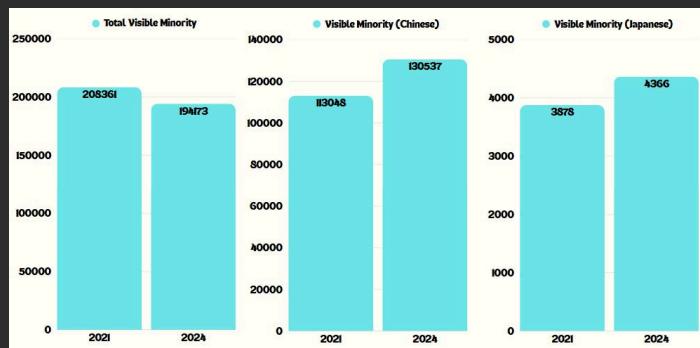


Fig 3. Total Visible Minority Status, Visible Chinese Minority and Visible Japanese Minority in Richmond

The total non minority population in Richmond cannot be overlooked. From Figures 4 and 5, the total non minority populations in both the census track and all around Richmond have increased overtime. However, there is a chance that this is incorrect because 2021 may have been under reported due to COVID.

Regardless, even though the non minorities is a much smaller proportion of the population, many residents have likely lived in Richmond for many years and have familiarized themselves with Asian foods including Japanese.

The mix of cultures in Richmond, though primarily ethnically Chinese, in combination with Richmond's Japanese heritage might explain why Japanese restaurants like Torake can succeed even without a strong Japanese population.

Aside from ethnicity and local cultural influences, residents must also have the means to support eating out, income levels may also provide insight into Torake's demographics.

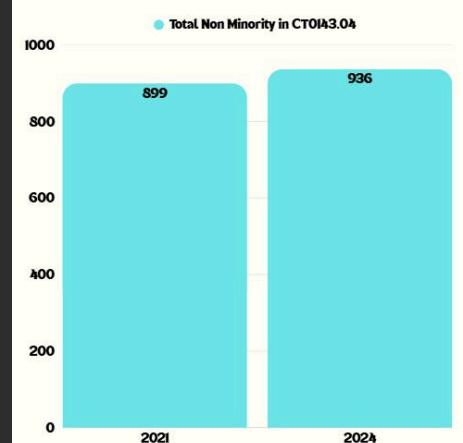


Fig 4. Total Non-Minority in CT0143.04

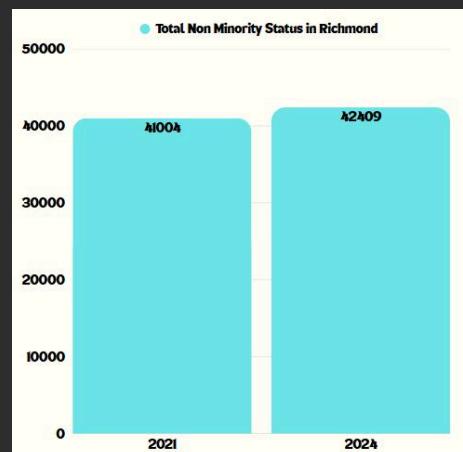


Fig 5. Total Non Minority in Richmond



Torake Demographics: Total Median Household Income

Another important demographic to think about is the total median household income, it reflects the potential spending power of local residents and can illustrate their financial growth overtime.

In Figure 1, the total median household income adjusted for inflation from 2020 to 2024 rose by almost \$40,000 in the census tract where Torake is located.

We can see a similar case in Figure 2, the total median household income adjusted for inflation in Richmond increased by approximately 40% as well.

A potential reason for such a large increase in total median household income may be housing values.

Figure 3 portrays the Vancouver Median Housing Prices from Jan 1990 to Jan 2022 while adjusted for inflation, house values have quadrupled over approximately 30 years.

Richmond median housing price data was unavailable for those time periods, I chose to use Vancouver's housing data as it closely aligns with Richmond's average detached sale prices from the same time, Jan 2022.

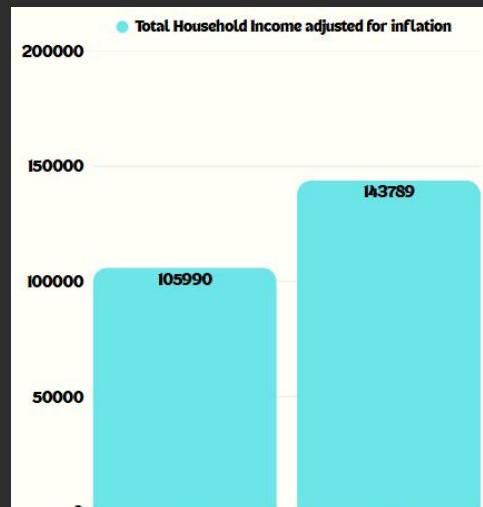


Fig 1. Total Median Household Income (adjusted) in CT0143.04

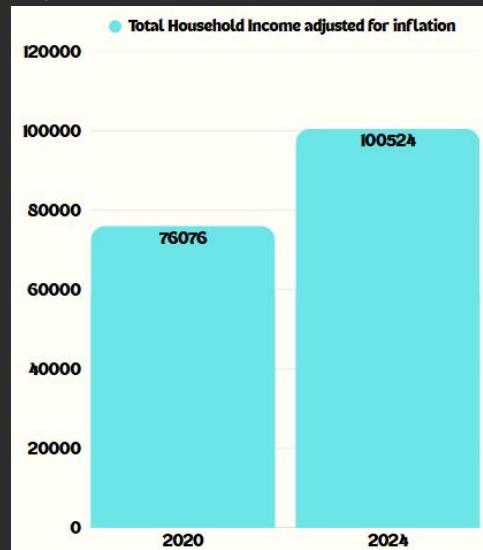


Fig 2. Total Median Household Income (adjusted) in Richmond

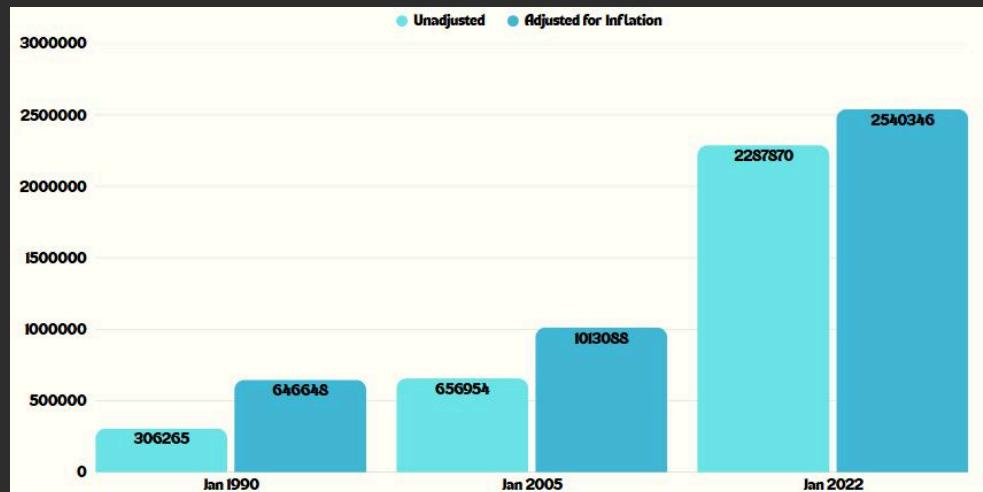


Fig 3. Vancouver Median Housing Prices Jan 1990 – Jan 2022

The past few years of housing prices have been fairly stable compared to the previous 30 years of explosive growth as seen in Figures 3 and 4. Home owners that purchased their home in the past 10–30 years are able to build significant equity because of the massive increase in housing prices. This wealth results in a population that is able to spend more on leisure such as dining.



Fig 4. Average Detached Home Sales Price in Richmond 2022–2025



Torake Demographics: Age of Residents

To understand the demographics more, I looked at the age of local residents to see if they could be old enough to be home owners, this could justify the sharp increases in median household income.

Figure 1 shows that the average age of residents in the census track where Torake resides has stayed the same from 2021 to 2024.

Figure 2 only reinforces the fact that the average age in Richmond is early 40's as the average age for 2021 and 2024 was 43 and 41 respectively.

The relatively stable age suggests that Richmond has long term and established residents, not a short term population such as students who rent. This supports my previous idea that residents are home owners who purchased their homes in the past 10+ years. Furthermore, those in their 40's are typically more established and financially stable; they can afford to eat out more often. These factors contribute to the restaurant's demographic.

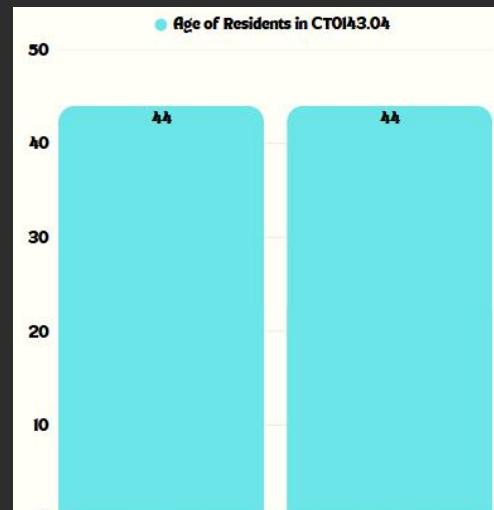


Fig 1. Age of Residents in CTO143.04

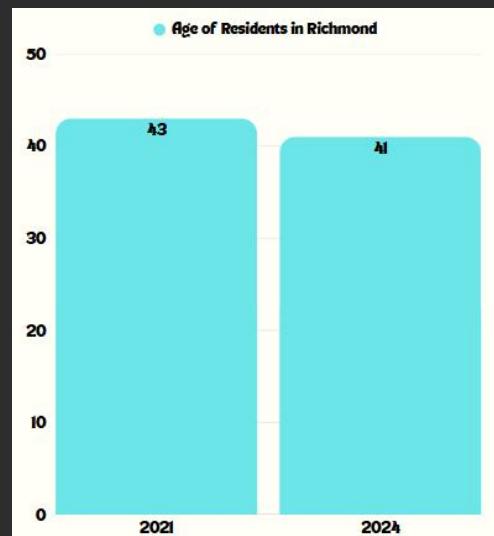


Fig 2. Age of Residents in Richmond

Across Figures 4, 5 and 6, the largest age group is 50-64, then 65-85 and finally 35-49. These figures reinforce the previous suggestion that Richmond has long term and established home owners.

The large amount of children in CTO143.04 and the rest of Richmond, in combination with a more mature population, points towards primarily family households.

Within the census track and the surrounding neighbourhoods, residents aged 20-34 is the lowest. This gap in the population implies that these area's, which are mainly detached houses, are unaffordable for the vast majority because of the income disparity.

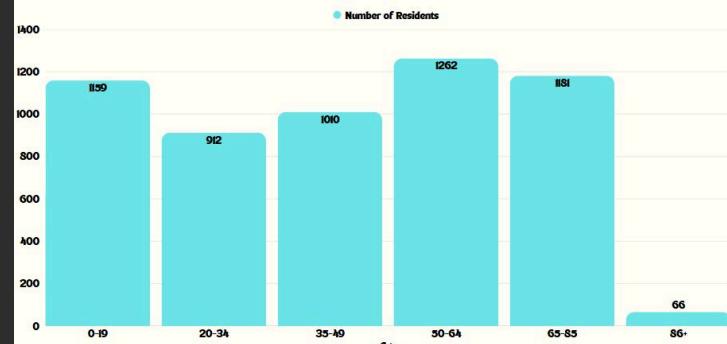


Fig 4. Age of Residents in CTO143.04

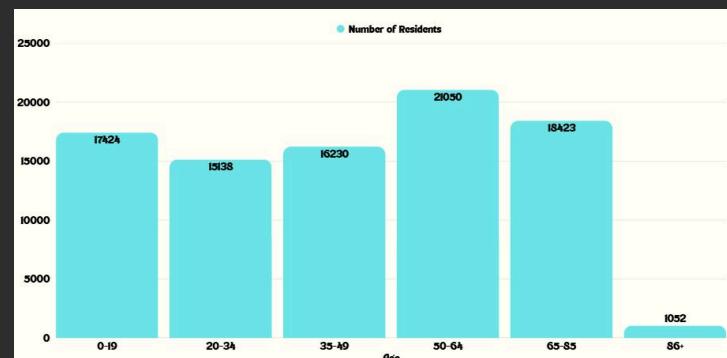


Fig 5. Age of Residents in 2km radius around CTO143.04

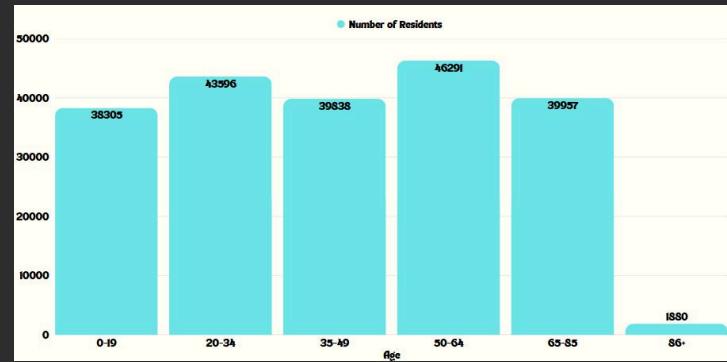


Fig 6. Age of Residents in Richmond

Interactive Context Map

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Context Map for Majority of Richmond – Click on the title to access the map online!

Interactive Context Map



Context Map for immediate neighbourhoods around Torake – Click on the title to access the map online!

Interactive Context Map



Context Map for CT0143.04 - Click on the title to access the map online!

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