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SSHA Community Engagement Review

Final Report

MAY 12, 2021

Table of Contents

1	Introduction
2	Key findings
4	Recommendations
14	Appendix A: Contributors to this report
19	Appendix B: Overview of the Community Engagement Review process

Introduction

This report offers recommendations to enhance the City of Toronto — Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's (SSHA) community engagement process for new locations for shelters and other services for people experiencing homelessness.

From October 2020 to April 2021, BGM Strategy Group (BGM) conducted a review of SSHA's current community engagement process, speaking with a range of partners and stakeholders to identify opportunities to make this process more responsive to community needs and circumstances.

Objectives

The objectives of this review — and the recommendations put forward here — are to equip SSHA to:

1. Increase understanding and lessen anxiety among residents about how decisions about new shelters and other service sites for people experiencing homelessness are made, and the impact on their communities;
2. Respond to individual community needs and circumstances with a flexible approach; and
3. Enhance SSHA's community engagement structures, practices and processes based on the principles and foundations of the [Meeting in the Middle strategy](#).

These recommendations build on the directions established through the new community engagement process and shelter

service model adopted in 2017.¹ These changes were a step forward in equipping SSHA to perform its role in securing sites for homelessness services and facilitating solutions-focused community engagement around new locations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, SSHA has been required to quickly implement emergency measures to enable physical distancing in shelters and keep shelter users safe. These circumstances limited SSHA's ability to carry out community engagement activities. This report recognizes these exceptional circumstances, while also highlighting how these circumstances reveal opportunities to strengthen the community engagement process regardless of the specific timelines and constraints SSHA is working within.

Together, the recommendations in this report encourage a broader view of engagement throughout the full lifecycle of a service site — from the pre-planning phase before a site is identified, through planning and engagement in advance of the opening of a new service, to ongoing site operation. Actions taken to plan around community needs and build relationships and understanding at any stage can create a “virtuous cycle” that positively impacts community's engagement for both new and existing sites. This report identifies actions that can be taken across the lifecycle of service sites to strengthen community engagement and ensure shelters and other services for people experiencing homelessness are set up for success.

¹ City of Toronto, “Proposed New Engagement and Planning Process for Emergency Shelters,” March 30, 2017, <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2017/cd/bgrd/backgroundfile-102504.pdf>.

Key findings

- 01 The new engagement and planning process adopted in 2017 achieved gains in the City’s ability to site services, execute engagement processes, and build relationships between homelessness service sites and neighbourhood residents.** Key strengths include delegated authority; consistent use of a third-party facilitator; the creation of solutions-focused Community Liaison Committees; and shifting from large public meetings to open house, station-style meeting formats.
- 02 What happens during the official engagement process often has less impact on generating support and understanding among residents than what happens before, such as Councillors’ positions, how the public finds out about the service, how many other services for people experiencing homelessness exist in the neighbourhood, and what happens after the site opens, such as the degree to which the service affects its neighbours.**
- 03 Much of the work done during the community engagement process involves building a foundational understanding of things that are not site-specific, such as causes of homelessness, the range of housing and homelessness services the City provides, the City’s siting process, and the City’s broader housing and homelessness plans. At the same time, residents’ interest in learning about these things is highly motivated by the potential of a service near them, limiting the impact of any widespread education campaigns.**
- 04 There is a lack of shared understanding among City staff (both within and outside of SSHA), Councillors, operators and residents on the purpose and goals of community engagement for new shelter and homelessness service sites.** Residents often initially interpret the community engagement process as an opportunity to influence site selection, and upon learning they do not have influence over this decision, express confusion about how their input will be used. City staff, Councillors, and operators each clearly identified important goals and objectives of the community engagement process, without alignment among them. This lack of consistency on what community engagement is for can lend itself to frustration and mistrust, as stakeholders have differing expectations and views on what “engagement” and “transparency” mean.
- 05 Staff across the City and City agencies do not always have a clear, shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and sequencing of community engagement activities in the rollout of the new service site.** This can result in confusion among the public about how decisions are made, what outcomes City staff, Councillors and operators have the ability to influence, and whom to contact with concerns or questions. This can also create frustration for staff of all involved, with each in turn feeling either left in the dark or left to bear the responsibility unsupported.

06 Compressed timelines during the COVID-19 pandemic have prevented City staff from carrying out elements of the engagement process that typically work well before the opening of a new site.

The need to rapidly achieve physical distancing in the shelter system, and forgoing community engagement for some of the new physical distancing sites, was the result of an exceptional situation. Acting with great urgency during the pandemic was necessary, as the City sacrificed taking the time to engage with communities in order to save lives. This has impacted relationships with Councillors and the public and highlighted the importance of community engagement to the success of a service site.

07 Indigenous-specific sites face the most significant discrimination, and elements of the community engagement process that typically work well are not necessarily as relevant and helpful.

Respondents uniformly noted that Indigenous-specific sites face the greatest amount of

opposition, and, through engagement, can be subject to a greater amount of assumptive and abusive public reaction. Indigenous-specific sites require a distinct approach, both to avoid exposing Indigenous operators and service users to racism and to recognize Indigenous sovereignty.

08 SSHA's Planning and Engagement Unit currently serves to support activities beyond its original mandate of engaging for the opening of 1,000 new shelter beds and George Street Revitalization relocation sites.

The City's commitment to shift from an emergency shelter response to homelessness to a housing response means that no additional shelter capacity is planned. Currently, the Planning and Engagement Unit's expertise is used across SSHA in mediating with the public on a wide range of issues, such as the relocation of sites for people experiencing homelessness, placement of other homelessness service sites, or complaints arising from established sites.

Recommendations

1. Develop a five-year capital infrastructure strategy for homelessness services across the City.

BGM recommends that SSHA develop a capital infrastructure strategy to identify the capital implications of its five year service plan. Though the shelter system is no longer expanding, sites will need to be relocated, especially as COVID-19 sites wind down and the City works towards its goal of improving service availability in all areas of Toronto. There is significant concentration of City-funded homelessness services in some areas of the city, which has amplified externalities and community opposition in some neighbourhoods, while increasing the likelihood that residents who lose their housing in many parts of the city will need to uproot themselves from their established networks in order to access services. Given the size of the system is now stable, a capital infrastructure strategy would equip SSHA in targeting efforts to achieve more even access to services for residents across the city.

A capital infrastructure strategy would apply to all of SSHA and guide the investment of capital dollars to meet divisional priorities over a five-year period. It will help tell a comprehensive story of SSHA's capital investment and how its investments will be targeted to meet short, medium and long-term needs across the continuum of homelessness services into housing.

Site selection is highly subject to market conditions and limited real estate availability. A capital infrastructure strategy would not determine site selection outside of these constraints. However, whereas SSHA currently assesses service gaps and develops capital infrastructure plans on an annual basis, a longer-term capital infrastructure strategy would enable SSHA to:

- Identify key service gaps across the city and target efforts to ensure that all residents are able to access a continuum of housing and homelessness services in their own communities.
- Align capital planning with the City's long-term housing and homelessness plans and with the mandates of other relevant parts of the City (e.g. Poverty Reduction Strategy, Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy).
- Focus efforts for targeted, proactive engagement in relevant neighbourhoods; provide the public with a tangible understanding of the City's overall plan; communicate broader planning considerations to the public in advance of site-specific engagement; and begin building relationships with community stakeholders in advance of site-specific engagement.
- Initiate conversations with Councillors around capital planning and community engagement needs earlier.

Once developed, the capital infrastructure strategy should be shared with the public, reported against as part of SSHA's annual infrastructure update to Council, and discussed with Councillors through individual briefings.

2. Work with Indigenous service providers to develop a distinct approach to community engagement that recognizes Indigenous self-determination.

Recognizing the nation-to-nation relationship between the Crown and Indigenous peoples, we recommend that SSHA work with Indigenous service providers to develop a distinct framework for community engagement for Indigenous-led service sites. Currently, engagement activities frequently expose Indigenous staff and other community members to racism, while elements that may work well for non-Indigenous sites (such as collaboration with Toronto Police Services or local churches) can be ineffective and even harmful when applied to Indigenous-specific contexts.

An Indigenous-specific framework for community engagement should be grounded in Indigenous self-determination, aligned with the Meeting in the Middle strategy, generated through the leadership of Indigenous service providers, and supported and resourced by SSHA. The framework would establish an approach to community engagement that works for Indigenous communities, while recognizing Indigenous people are not responsible for addressing racism targeted towards them.

3. Customize engagement plans to neighbourhood characteristics.

BGM recommends that during engagement planning, the Community Engagement Facilitator(s) work with SSHA staff, the operator, and the local Councillor to assess neighbourhood characteristics, in order to equip the Facilitator to identify the most appropriate engagement methods based on the community profile and established best practices in public engagement.

Councillors can help advise the Community Engagement Facilitator on neighbourhood characteristics that will influence what methods will be most effective in reaching and involving the community in the engagement process. Other City functions, as well as City agencies, are also likely to have contacts in communities. Early joint planning with the range of partners who can contribute to the success of the shelter or homelessness service in the community (see recommendation #10) will also help to identify community characteristics and local leaders.

Neighbourhood characteristics that have been highlighted as influential include:

- **How the community organizes:** Different communities have different community hubs and channels for sharing information, such as community centres, faith centres, neighbourhood/resident associations, Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), or direct relationships with government.
- **Level of experience with shelters and other services for people experiencing homelessness:** Residents in a neighbourhood that does not have any existing services for people experiencing homelessness may require more engagement to understand the need for and nature of the service. Residents in a neighbourhood that already has many services for people experiencing homelessness may require less education on what to expect and more problem solving around priorities based on their experience.
- **Income levels:** Residents with lower incomes may face barriers to participating in community engagement, such as limited leisure time, lack of availability due to work, or costs of childcare to attend an in-person meeting. Ensuring the engagement process is accessible to people who face barriers to participating is necessary not only to equitable

engagement, but also to enabling SSHA to see the full picture of public opinion and community needs.

All public meetings should be designed in a way that creates a safe, welcoming environment for all community members (see recommendation #7). In order to create meaningful opportunities for participation, BGM suggests the following guidelines for designing engagement around key neighbourhood characteristics:

- **If the community is organized around official stakeholder or leadership groups:** Spend more time upfront in smaller, targeted meetings with stakeholder groups. Work proactively with the Councillor to ensure all political and apolitical City representatives have full information and consistent messaging.
- **If the community's hubs and channels for sharing information are more informal:** More foundational work may be needed to identify community leaders and existing locations and programs where information could be shared. Working with the Councillor in this regard may be mutually helpful: either the Councillor will have community contacts and awareness of current community events, and/or the identification of community contacts/event may benefit the Councillor. Engagement will require formats and channels that will be welcoming and acceptable to the community.
- **To reach low income or those likely to face barriers to participating in community engagement activities in any neighbourhood:** Prioritize convenient formats for engagement that minimize and makes flexible the time contributions required from residents. If participating in the engagement process is not a high priority for residents, the engagement process may involve more one-way communications in different formats with an opportunity to respond, rather than assuming people will respond to an invitation for a single in-depth meeting.

For sites with short time periods between site purchase and opening, it may not be possible for SSHA to conduct engagement planning or other recommendations included in this report in full. As SSHA continues to work under pressure to move quickly to open necessary services for vulnerable residents, compressed timelines pose a real constraint for building understanding and support around these services. However, by implementing recommendations in this report that are targeted to other phases in the lifecycle of a site (specifically recommendations #1, #5, #9 and #10), SSHA will be able to begin engagement around new services earlier and provide information about new services more efficiently.

4. Review and clarify the role of Community Liaison Committees (CLCs).

CLCs can be a highly effective means of problem-solving for site-specific needs, addressing community concerns, and building understanding and support for a service in the broader community. However, the approach to CLC membership and activities varies across CLCs. CLCs were originally designed to be led by the Community Engagement Facilitator for three months prior to and the three months following the opening of a shelter or homelessness service. In practice, the timeline of CLC activities after opening varies significantly, with some CLC continuing to meet indefinitely and creating their own parameters for their ongoing role.

We recommend that SSHA review the role of CLCs and clarify their mandate, when they should be convened, how CLC membership is to be determined, and the parameters to guide CLC activities. These Terms of Reference should outline a consistent approach to these areas and provide greater guidance and support to local CLCs, while retaining the current flexibility for local groups to set their own agenda in response to community needs.² In reviewing and clarifying the role of CLCs, we encourage SSHA to consult materials currently being developed by the Toronto Shelter Network to offer guidance on convening CLCs.

Suggestions for the role of CLCs generated through this review include:

- Involving past CLC members in community engagement around new sites in other neighbourhoods, to share their experience living near a shelter with other residents.
- Orienting CLCs around tangible, solutions-focused activities aimed at the successful operation of the site in the community.

Once the role of CLCs has been clarified, BGM also recommends that SSHA work to build awareness of CLCs and their role among key stakeholders, as this awareness is uneven.

5. Develop standardized, pre-packaged communications materials that are not site-specific, and can be distributed early on and integrated throughout the community engagement process.

Much of the information provided by SSHA and requested by residents in the community engagement process is not site-specific — such as the City’s siting process, causes of homelessness, the nature of different types of homelessness services, and how a site fits into the City’s broader housing and homelessness plans.

BGM recommends that SSHA commission the creation of standard materials that provide such information. This would help streamline SSHA’s work and give residents easier access to the information they need, in a variety of accessible, consumable formats. Once created, these materials could also be used by other parts of the City or in other contexts.

These materials need to be compelling, educational, well produced, and in plain language. This may require engaging specialized expertise, such as adult education experts, graphic designers, videographers, and the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee. Additionally, the creation of these materials should involve consultation with Strategic Communications and the Housing Secretariat.

Suggested materials:

- A limited series of information sheets that provide information on:
 - Causes of homelessness and the profile of homelessness in Toronto;
 - Dispelling myths and misconceptions about people experiencing homelessness and educating people on the right to housing and the right to health (see recommendation #7);

² The Toronto Shelter Network is currently developing a proposed Terms of Reference template for CLCs as part of The Welcome Home Project: Working Together to Create Inclusive Communities. We recommend that SSHA consult this template as part of reviewing and clarifying the role of CLCs.

- How sites are chosen for homelessness services;
 - Basic features of the type of service coming to a neighbourhood (e.g. built form, services and supports on site) and how the role of this service fits into the broader continuum of housing and homelessness services; and
 - The HousingTO 2020-2030 Action plan and the City’s other housing and homelessness initiatives.
- Visual storytelling materials (e.g. videos or print material with humanizing imagery) featuring people with lived experience of homelessness sharing their stories, speaking to the need for homelessness services in all parts of the city, and sharing how a shelter or other service has helped them in their journey.
 - Storytelling materials featuring people who live near a shelter or service site and can speak to the impacts, if any, on their neighbourhood.

Suggested uses:

- Accompaniments to the Public Information Notice
- Integrated into public meetings
- Integrated into Councillor newsletters discussing a new site
- Integrated into the Welcoming New Shelters web page
- Integrated into physical signs posted at all new sites
- Integrated into City of Toronto social media presence

We also recommend that all meeting formats and written materials be accessible in plain language, and that consideration is given to appropriate translation of materials if there are other predominant languages in the community.

6. Provide more frequent updates and project details for new sites through online communications channels.

Providing regular updates and project details can have a significant impact on addressing unease, “fear of the unknown,” and countering the spread of misinformation — especially for sites that have longer timelines between the site purchase and opening of the service. Even in the absence of significant project news, BGM recommends that SSHA provide frequent updates and project details to maintain the flow of communication and demonstrate transparency.

Suggested areas for sharing project updates and details include:

- Timelines for construction and opening
- Details about the service (These could also be drawn from materials developed under recommendation #5.)
- Details about the operator and staff that highlight expertise and experience
- Building design
- Video tours, pictures, and 3D renderings when these are available

Suggested communications channels:

- Site-specific electronic community bulletin (The contact list for each site could be passed on to the service operator after the site opens.)
- Councillor’s email newsletter (SSHA should write content for Councillors to share, in alignment with recommendation #9.)

- The web page that SSHA creates for each site, accessible from the “Welcoming New Shelters” web page.
- Social media, focusing initially on Facebook and neighbourhood Facebook groups. Research has identified social media platforms as the key site where misinformation is spread among the public.³ In the survey for local residents conducted as part of this review, “Neighbourhood Facebook group” was the second most cited way that residents learned about a shelter or other homelessness service coming to their neighbourhood. Sharing project updates and details through the City of Toronto’s Facebook presence can help to address the misinformation and questions from the community on Facebook. SSHA should monitor public dialogue across social media platforms and be prepared to adapt over time as people migrate to different platforms.

7. Develop methods for educating residents on the human rights-based approach to addressing homelessness.

While Community Engagement Facilitators typically establish “ground rules” for respectful engagement at the beginning of public meetings, public dialogue during community engagement often includes discriminatory comments and language towards people experiencing homelessness, with Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+, and Black and other racialized communities facing added layers of discrimination. Additionally, neighbourhood residents sometimes propose solutions to their concerns about a shelter that would undermine the human rights of shelter residents, such as limiting shelter residents’ mobility and access to public space; limiting shelter residents’ access to harm reduction supports; or making shelter residents’ access to housing dependent on employment or other conditions.

Many residents may be unfamiliar with rights-based frameworks to understand issues, and we are all often unaware of our own prejudice. Further, these conversations occur within a context of general social and political polarization, which features disinformation, echo-chambers in public discourse, and great public sensitivity to the perception of being “silenced.” To effectively build relationships with communities and build understanding around shelters and other homelessness services, staff need responses that fall between condoning through silence and censure.

BGM recommends that SSHA develop specific methods for promoting dialogue that fosters understanding and grounding in a human rights-based framework. SSHA may choose to draw on specialized expertise in this area. Methods raised through this review include:

- Educating residents on the right to housing and the right to health (drawing from communications materials developed under recommendation #5).
- Adhering to and communicating the City’s commitment to rights-based decision-making, meaning that “decisions are reviewed against their impact on human rights.”⁴
- Implementing meeting formats and elements that encourage empathy, connection, and solutions-focused discussion over confrontation, and affirm the “belonging” of shelter residents, such as:⁵

³ Faculty of Environmental & Urban Change, York University, “Overcoming the Public Engagement Dilemma in the Siting of Homeless Housing and Services in Toronto: A Comparative Perspective,” forthcoming.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

- Addressing barriers to equitable engagement (see recommendation #3) to encourage participation from people from all types of housing situations
- Centering storytelling
- Offer refreshments and opportunities for “breaking bread” through local catering or food that reflects cultures in the community and/or populations to be served by a shelter
- Organizing speaking opportunities around specific elements of the service (e.g. hosting station-style meetings, or small groups focused on problem solving for a specific challenge)

8. Deepen operators’ involvement in community engagement activities.

Operators can help to demystify the site, speak to the services that will be provided, and share practical information that can have a significant impact in soothing residents’ concerns. Many operators also bring extensive track records that can assuage resident anxiety. Additionally, as responsibility for community engagement is transferred to operators after opening a site, involving operators throughout the process promotes continuity for local residents.

Operators should not be made responsible for the execution of initial public engagement. Rather, they can be drawn upon during the engagement process as experts who can offer explanatory information and credibility. Additionally, SSHA can work with the operator to mobilize board members as leaders in the community (for example, by writing an op-ed about the need for a specific service or speaking at a public meeting about their experience as a board member for a community agency).

Deepening operators’ involvement in community engagement requires securing the operator as early on as possible. Operators also need support and resourcing from SSHA to undertake community engagement activities. Input from this review suggests that agency-operated shelters often receive less support for community engagement than City-operated shelters.

9. Equip Councillors with the right information at the right time.

Councillors have a significant role to play in supporting SSHA staff to carry out their mandates and in setting up the community engagement process for success. Communication from Councillors can be one of the most effective means of countering misinformation and providing the community with accurate and helpful information. Additionally, Councillors can have a significant impact on the tenor of the public conversation around a new site.

Activating the value that Councillors can bring to the community engagement process requires a commitment from Councillors, as well as support and tools from City staff to ensure that Councillors are informed about a new site and equipped to share information with residents in a timely manner. SSHA can better position Councillors to help strengthen the community engagement process by:

- Briefing Councillors about a planned new service before Delegated Authority Forms are posted online, and following up with Councillors (through multiple communications channels if required) to confirm receipt of this notice.
- Providing Councillors with opportunities to advise on neighbourhood characteristics and identify stakeholders to inform the Community Engagement Plan.
- Informing Councillors of the results of joint planning discussions (see Recommendation #10).
- Providing Councillors with pre-written materials they can use to share news about the site with residents and respond to questions or concerns across the entire engagement timeline (e.g. Text for email newsletter, standardized communications materials identified in Recommendation #5), and coordinating the timing of these materials with the posting of a Delegated Authority Form.

10. Develop protocol for joint planning with other parts of the City and City agencies to anticipate and adjust for potential impacts of a new service site.

Ensuring that new sites are equipped with the full range of required services — such as on-site supports, waste management, or outdoor space for smoking or recreation — is not only necessary to serve clients well, but also to minimize issues that can arise around a new service site. Joint planning with all relevant parts of the City and City agencies can help ensure that all relevant parties are privy to the same information early in the process, have the same basis of knowledge and familiarity with one another to be able to present coherently to the public, and are prepared to respond to service demands and potential impacts once the site is operational.

BGM recommends that:

9a) SSHA convene a joint operational planning table with senior staff from across relevant City divisions and agencies to establish general protocols to respond to the service demands of new sites; and

9b) As soon as a new site is identified (or earlier, as supported by the Capital Infrastructure Strategy outlined in recommendation #1), other relevant City and City agency staff are brought into this joint planning table for site-specific planning to realize these protocols for each new site.

The following parts of the City or City agencies each play a role in: ensuring shelter residents and their neighbours have access to required services; preventing issues, and; planning for the potential impacts of a new site:

- **Toronto Public Health and Toronto Employment and Social Services** — To bring needed supports and resources to a site.
- **Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Waste Management, and Toronto Fire Services** — To be prepared to respond to real and perceived impacts of a new site on public space. For example, being made aware of potential for garbage build up in areas surrounding shelter sites, or being prepared to respond to public complaints about perceived loitering in parks.
- **Toronto Police Services** — To anticipate potential externalities to a site and contribute to collaborative service planning that can strengthen non-police responses to any issues that may arise, recognizing the people most likely to become victims of crime are shelter users.

- **Toronto Public Libraries** — To be prepared to respond to real and perceived impacts of a new site on public space and expand programming to serve new community members.
- **Economic Development and Culture** — To identify opportunities to encourage local procurement, employment opportunities and partnerships, working with BIAs, and oversee opportunities for public art that can serve as an engagement tool.
- **Toronto Children’s Services** — To engage key stakeholders working in the area around children and plan responses for concerns related to community safety.
- **Corporate Security** — To determine approach to deploying security on site.
- **Social Development, Finance and Administration** — To help plan for community safety and inclusion.

Other actors who may not need to be involved in joint planning but have a role to play in the implementation of joint planning include:

- **311** — To be prepared to respond to community concerns or issues reported.
- **Toronto Paramedic Services** — To be prepared to respond to overdoses or other health emergencies.
- **Local schools** — To be prepared to respond to any concerns from parents.

Guidelines for this joint planning:

- A capital infrastructure strategy could enable this joint planning to occur prior to purchasing a site and garner further insights informing site selection.
- Where compressed timelines do not allow for this joint planning prior to the opening of a site, BGM recommends that SSHA still convene these partners to respond to the needs and impacts of the new site.
- The above partners need to understand the size of the shelter, the service profile, and site characteristics – and work together to anticipate potential consequences if there is no accommodation made and create shared plans.
- If the site operator is selected, involving them can also help to identify what services and supports may be needed.
- Joint planning should be used to clarify information to be shared across the verticals of each planning partner, so staff at multiple levels of relevant parties have access to the same information.
- Joint planning can also inform the creation of contact sheets, so all parties can consistently and coherently communicate to the public (and each other) whom to contact about what. This protocol should then be shared with 311.
- Staff in other parts of the City or City agencies are likely to have varying levels of understanding on homelessness. Some baseline information sharing about homelessness and homelessness services will be required at the outset of joint planning.

11. Review and clarify the scope of SSHA’s Planning and Engagement Unit

SSHA’s Planning and Engagement Unit has developed a skillset that assists many of their colleagues on a variety of issues. This has expanded the scope of the team and stretched its attention and resources. Even as the Planning and Engagement Unit is working in new areas, the shift from emergency shelter to housing as a response to homelessness requires an evolution from the original mandate of the Unit: engaging with the public around the expansion of the shelter system.

BGM recommends that the City review the current activities, skills and expertise in the Planning and Engagement Unit, identify the needs for that expertise across SSHA and potentially other parts of the City, and refine the Planning and Engagement Unit's mandate, goals, and objectives to ensure that this resource is deployed strategically and with measurable impact against its goals.

Conclusion

Through this Community Engagement Review, partners and stakeholders in SSHA's community engagement process have highlighted valuable opportunities to strengthen community engagement around homelessness service sites. Together, these recommendations offer guidance for how SSHA and its partners can act on these opportunities at all stages of the lifecycle of a service site, in order to deepen relationships, collaboration, and understanding, respond both proactively and flexibly to community needs, and ensure that these sites — and those they serve — are set up for success.

Appendix A: Contributors to this report

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	Enrique Cochegrus	Director, St. Felix
	Kayla Chambers	Community Liaison Worker, YWCA Davenport Shelter
	Haydar Shouly	Senior Manager, Dixon Hall
	Keith Hambly	CEO, Fred Victor
	Krystina Damyanovich	Community Program Coordinator, Salvation Army
	Leticia Ferreria	Director of Strategic Initiatives, Friends of Ruby
	Madison Perdue	Community Engagement Coordinator, St. Felix
	Melanie Smith	Supervisor, Community Engagement, Dixon Hall
	Patricia Mueller	Executive Director, Homes First
	Phil Clarke	Assistant Director, Salvation Army - New Hope Leslieville
Ryan Evershed	Manager of Community Engagement & Client Programming, Homes First	
Simranjit Kaur	Manager, Salvation Army - New Hope Leslieville	
Sylvia Braithwaite	Director of Shelters and Women's 24 Hour Drop-in Services, Fred Victor	
Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board	Andrea Chrisjohn	Board Designate, Toronto Council Fire
	Angus Palmer	General Manager, Wigwamen Inc.
	Bonnie Wakely	Manager, Operations and Support Services, City of Toronto

		– Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
	Bryan Winters	Executive Director, Toronto Inuit Association
	Chanda Kennedy	SSHA, City of Toronto
	Frances Sanderson	Executive Director, Nishnawbe Homes
	Hillary Kierstead	Housing Consultant, Housing Stability Services, City of Toronto – Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
	Katherine Lis	Housing Consultant, Housing Stability Services, City of Toronto – Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
	Larry Frost	Executive Director, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
	Linda Wood	Manager, Street Needs Assessment, Service Planning & Integrity Unit, City of Toronto – Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
	Lindsay Kertschmer	Executive Director, Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council
	Nadia Campbell	Senior Program Development Officer, Employment and Social Development Canada/Service Canada
	Sarah-Mae Rahal	Residential Manager, Thunder Women Healing Lodge Society
	Siobhan McCarthy	Director of Holistic Services, Native Child and Family Services
	Stephanie Malcher	Manager, Coordinated Access, Service Planning & Integrity Unit, City of Toronto – Shelter, Support & Housing Administration
	Steve Teekens	Executive Director, Na-Me-Res
	Suzanne Brunelle	Toronto York Metis Council
Toronto Police Services	David Rydzik	Superintendent, 43 Division
	Mark Barkley	Staff Superintendent, Communities and Neighbourhoods Command
	Peter Moreira	Superintendent, 51 Division

Appendix B: Overview of the community engagement review process

The findings and recommendations outlined in this report were generated through a combination of research and engagement with a range of partners and stakeholders in the community engagement process, taking place from October 2020 to April 2021.

These activities took place through a phased approach:

- Phase 1: Understanding the current state and affirming approach to the review
- Phase 2: Evaluating findings and generating solutions
- Phase 3: Refining and finalizing recommendations

Research and engagement methodologies used in this review include:

- Document review of relevant City documents, including relevant internal planning documents, engagement materials, previous evaluations of community engagement activities, and reports to City Council
- Research scan of community engagement best practices
- Key informant interviews with 29 individuals held from January-April 2021, to understand key challenges and potential solutions from a range of stakeholder perspectives
- In-person survey administered with 30 shelter residents at three locations
- Online survey for local residents open from February 25 to March 11, 2021, with approximately 1,400 responses
- Online survey for shelter and service operators open from February 25 to March 11, 2021, with a total of 98 respondents
- 3 virtual focus groups with local residents, including:
 - Residents who have participated on a Community Liaison Committee (6 participants)
 - Residents who live near a shelter or homelessness service site and have not participated on a Community Liaison Committee (19 participants)
 - Residents who do not live near a shelter or homelessness service site and have not participated in the City of Toronto's community engagement process (10 participants)
- One virtual focus group with shelter and service operator staff, including Community Liaison Workers
- 3 virtual focus groups with SSHA staff, including:
 - SSHA Senior Management Team (6 participants)
 - General Manager's Office; Homelessness Initiatives and Prevention Services; Confronting-Anti Black Racism Unit; and Infrastructure, Planning and Development (7 participants)
 - SSHA Infrastructure, Planning and Development Team (11 participants)
- Two meetings with the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board
- One joint workshop with City staff from across divisions and shelter operator staff to discuss preliminary findings and recommendations
- Briefings with City Councillors on draft recommendations

- Ongoing input from SSHA – Infrastructure, Planning & Development project team

Stakeholders and partners engaged through this review include:

- Architects
- City Councillors
- Community Engagement Facilitators
- Local residents and residents' associations
- Business Improvement Areas
- Shelter residents and people with lived experience of homelessness
- Shelter and service operators, including senior staff and Community Liaison Workers
- Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board
- Toronto Police Services
- City staff from across the following divisions:
 - City Manager's Office
 - Corporate Real Estate Management
 - Housing Secretariat
 - Indigenous Affairs Office
 - Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
 - Social Development & Finance Administration
 - Strategic Communications
 - Toronto Public Health