

Downtown East Action Plan - Implementation Progress and Next Steps

Date: June 21, 2022

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration

Wards: 13

SUMMARY

This report details the progress of implementation of the Downtown East Five Year Action Plan. The Downtown East Action Plan was developed to address a number of complex and entrenched challenges in the area related to poverty, homelessness, housing, community safety, mental health and substance use, particularly the drug poisoning crisis. Implementation of the plan began in July 2019 following City Council approval of the Five Year Action Plan and a Work Plan to guide the first phase of work.

The majority of actions in the Work Plan have been advanced, although the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the trajectory of implementation as many City and community serviced were required to pivot to address critical needs and deep vulnerabilities across Toronto. Through significant cross-divisional and multi-sectoral collaboration, a number of initiatives have been launched to advance the Action Plan and, with the onset of the pandemic, to address emerging issues in the Downtown East area. Investments were made in initiatives that provide outreach and crisis intervention, enhance supports for individuals experiencing marginalization, deliver trauma-informed training and supports for frontline staff and advance actions to enhance safety for all community members. Through actions and partnerships, the Action Plan has begun to respond to the issues in the area. However, as noted in the recommendations, engagement from multiple parties including all levels of government is needed to address the entrenched challenges in this area.

This report provides:

- An update on the progress on implementation of the Downtown East Action Plan, including a detailed summary outlining the status of Work Plan actions and outcomes, provided as Attachment A;
- An overview of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the Downtown East area and on the issues that are addressed by the Action Plan;
- An outline of significant changes to the Downtown East context including City strategic policy and program additions that have occurred since the Action Plan was approved; and
- Details of next steps to be advanced in the implementation of the Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration recommends that:

1. City Council request the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration in consultation with other relevant City divisions report back to the Economic and Community Development Committee in the third quarter of 2023 with an update on the progress of implementation and recommendations, including resource requirements, for Phase 2 of the Downtown East Action Plan.
2. City Council request the Province of Ontario, (particularly the Ministries of Health; Children, Community and Social Services; the Solicitor General; the Attorney General, and Municipal Affairs and Housing), and the Government of Canada (particularly Health Canada; Department of Justice Canada; the Public Health Agency of Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) collaborate and directly partner with the City and other stakeholders to establish and implement the following priorities from the Downtown East Action Plan:
 - a. Health, including mental health, investments both capital and operating, that align with the critical needs of the city's vulnerable communities, particularly wraparound responses and options for those experiencing mental health, developmental disabilities or substance use challenges; and
 - b. Supportive housing and housing stability program investments to align with the principles and goals of the Downtown East Housing Strategy and the HousingTO 2020 - 2030 Action Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Following its approval in July 2019, the City has supported the implementation of the Downtown East Action Plan through existing resources from a number of City divisions. Since 2020, Social Development, Finance and Administration's base Operating Budget has included annual funding of approximately \$1.47 million that has been fully allocated to support the implementation of the plan, including one staffing resource, and resources to enable the development and implementation of outreach and response initiatives, training for frontline staff, community based research, and plan monitoring and evaluation.

Ongoing funding will be required for 2023 and future years to support the implementation of the Downtown East Action Plan. Social Development, Finance and Administration and other City Divisions will review their capacity and resources and will include funding requests in future budget submissions for consideration along with other City priorities, if required. The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

On May 11, 2022, City Council adopted Item PH33.3, Dundas-Sherbourne Neighbourhood Revitalization - Update, which directed a community visioning and master planning exercise to support the future plan for the Dan Harrison Community Complex and the Dundas-Sherbourne neighbourhood. The report also directed staff to develop a Downtown East Housing Strategy to connect the many housing projects occurring in the area. Council directed CreateTO to explore real estate opportunities in the area for strategic city-building purposes and pursue partnership opportunities to support neighbourhood revitalization.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.PH33.6>

On February 2, 2022, City Council adopted the Community Crisis Service Pilot report that provided direction to pilot the Toronto Community Crisis Service in response to non-emergency mental health crisis calls and wellbeing checks. Four pilots featuring community-led mobile crisis support teams comprised of a multidisciplinary team of crisis workers with crisis intervention and de-escalation training will be dispatched to respond to non-emergency crisis calls involving a person in crisis, wellness checks and other calls to be determined. Community health service partners will become anchor partners to ensure that adaptive and service-user centred care continues after the initial intervention. The Downtown East area is served by one of the pilots.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EX29.1>

On July 14, 2021 SafeTO, the City of Toronto's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan focused on advancing 26 actions across 7 goals was adopted by Council. On February 2, 2022, Council adopted the SafeTO Implementation Plan outlining key actions and deliverables in the 2022 work plan that will advance four priority actions contributing to significant policy and service transformations in the areas of mental health crisis response, gun violence reduction, supports for communities impacted by violence and data analysis across multiple institutions.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.EX25.4>

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2022.EX29.2>

On July 16, 17 and 18, 2019, City Council adopted the Downtown East 2023 Five Year Action Plan, which included a summary of the outcomes of the enhanced 12-month Action Plan, an 18 month Work Plan for the five year Action Plan, four central outcomes and a proposed framework for measuring success.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EC6.16>

On April 16, 2019, Council adopted MM6.13 which directed the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration to update the "Review of the Dan Harrison Community Complex" and to include a renewed comprehensive strategy to address the long-standing complex challenges in the upcoming Five-Year Downtown East Action Plan and to work in partnership with Toronto Community Housing to co-develop a timeline for implementation and full costing and report the outcomes to the October 15, 2019 meeting of the Planning and Housing Committee.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.MM6.13>

On March 7, 2019, City Council adopted the 2019 budget which included the following service level enhancements related to the Downtown East: enhanced street and laneway cleaning under Solid Waste Management Services, continuation of seven Downtown East Action Plan - Implementation Progress and Next Steps

street outreach workers for Toronto Public Health, and enhanced staffing levels for Parks Ambassadors and Park Cleanup across the Downtown East area.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.EX2.5>

On June 26, 2018, City Council adopted CD 29.5, which approved an Enhanced 12 month immediate Action Plan for the Downtown East Area, expanding the area from Bay St. to the DVP and Front St. to Bloor St. including the immediate vicinity of the Respite Centre at 21 Park Road while it is operational. This item included 36 action items, which were assigned to multiple City Divisions. It also included a direction to report back with a five-year Action Plan for the community in the second quarter of 2019.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.CD29.5>

On February 12, 2018, City Council adopted the 2018 budget which included allocations for one temporary full-time position to oversee the coordination of the DTE Action Plan.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.EX31.2>

On December 5, 2017 City Council adopted motion MM 37.15 to address the service gap in the Downtown East Revitalization Area. Council requested City staff to identify resources required to address current challenges and report to Budget Committee with a funding request. Council also directed City staff to establish an expert staff team to respond to the immediate crisis and develop a comprehensive 5-year plan.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.MM35.17>

EQUITY IMPACT

The City of Toronto's Downtown East area has been home to diverse populations who live, work, and play in the area, with representation of many communities including Indigenous, Black, 2SLGBTQ+, racialized communities, newcomers, and people living on a low-income. This area is also home to a high number of people who are marginalized, which is defined in the Downtown East Action Plan as people who are at risk because of a lack of affordable and supportive housing, access to safe drug supply, and/or adequate mental health services and supports. These individuals often experience social stigma and discrimination that can further exclude them from society.

The Downtown East Five Year Action Plan outlines several initiatives to address barriers and the needs of individuals in the Downtown East area. The Action Plan also includes initiatives focused on improving the City of Toronto's ability to implement programs and services that take into account the needs and perspectives of a variety of community members, including residents with lived experience of marginalization. The actions in the Action Plan have been developed to yield benefits for community members including individuals who are Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving and for people who are marginalized. Potential negative impacts will continue to be mitigated through coordinated action and a number of interventions and strategic initiatives.

COMMENTS

The Downtown East area is defined as Bloor Street to the north, Front Street to the south, Bay Street to the west, and the Don Valley Parkway to the east. Many distinct
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neighbourhoods are in this area, including Moss Park, St. James Town, Church-Wellesley Village, and Cabbagetown. These neighbourhoods have resilient social networks, a history of community involvement, and a sense of local identity. Regent Park also falls within the area boundaries, however as a community identified for revitalization, the area is guided by a separate process that includes the Regent Park Social Development Plan.

The Downtown East is a destination for people from across Toronto and outside the city for jobs, services, shopping, entertainment and tourism, drawing large numbers of people on a daily basis. This contributes to the economy and vibrancy of the community but can also bring negative impacts associated with masses of people including heightened congestion, litter, and incidents of social disorder.

At a Glance:

- The Downtown East area is home to approximately 119,469 individuals, representing 4.3% of the City's population¹. This is a fast-growing area with estimated population growth at 14.6% from 2016 - 2021 according to census data compared to a population growth rate of 2.3% for the City as a whole. The Downtown Yonge East and Church-Wellesley neighbourhoods experienced the most significant growth in the area, approximately 36.6% and 24.7% respectively.
- Approximately 10.7% (431 out of 4019) of 211 listed community service organizations in Toronto are located in this area, providing a range of supports to the community.
- Opioid overdoses and the drug poisoning crisis continue to have a critical impact on the area. In 2021, there was a total of 6,350 calls for suspected opioid overdoses in Toronto (both fatal and non-fatal cases combined)². The two neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of calls were in the Downtown East area: Church-Yonge Corridor (1,187 calls) and Moss Park (838 calls).
- Based on the 2021 Street Needs Assessment³, it is estimated that there were 7,347 people experiencing homelessness in Toronto on April 21, 2021. Neighbourhood level information is not available but the Street Needs Assessment finds that individuals experience homelessness in all areas of Toronto.
 - Homelessness affects people from different backgrounds but some are overrepresented including individuals who identify as Indigenous (15%), Black (31%), racialized (60%), and non-binary, transgender, or Two-spirited (3.1%).
 - 76% of respondents to the Street Needs Assessment report one or more health challenges (such as mental health, substance use, illness or medical condition, physical limitation, learning or cognitive limitations).

1 A best match approximation of the Downtown East Area was used to collect statistical demographic information using census tracts and social planning neighbourhoods. The population counts and growth rates use 2016 and 2021 Census data for this geostatistical area.

2 The Toronto Overdose Information System Report, February 2022

3 The Street Needs Assessment is a point-in-time count of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-171729.pdf>

Overview of the Five Year Action Plan

The Downtown East Action Plan was developed to address a number of complex and entrenched challenges in the area related to poverty, homelessness, housing, community safety, mental health and substance use, particularly opioid related overdoses and the drug poisoning crisis. In response to the heightened need for supports in this area, in June 2018, City staff from multiple divisions began to implement a 12 month action plan and develop a five year plan for the area. In July 2019, City Council approved the Downtown East Five Year Action Plan (the "Action Plan") which included a work plan and an outline of resources required to support the first phase of implementation.

The Action Plan is designed to follow a nimble, responsive approach with ongoing monitoring of impact and effectiveness. Successful implementation relies on collaborative efforts across multiple groups including residents, businesses, community, academic and institutional partners as well as with different levels of government to address systemic challenges and advance system-level change.

Based on consultation across multiple sectors and City divisions, a review of the effectiveness of the 12 month plan, analysis of best and promising practices, and with the guidance of an Evaluation Advisory Committee, four central outcomes were established for the Action Plan. As further described in Table 1 below, these are:

- 1) Safe, Inclusive Communities;
- 2) Cross Sectoral Trust and Collaboration;
- 3) Stability for People Experiencing Marginalization; and
- 4) Model for a City Response to Complex Issues.

Table 1: Description of the Four Central Outcomes of the Action Plan

Central Outcome	Description
Safe, Inclusive Communities	Safe and inclusive communities are supportive for all that live, access services, work and play in the area. Safe communities are fostered when individuals are able to access spaces where they feel protected and secure and are able to rely on a timely, respectful and appropriate response when their safety is compromised. Inclusive communities support people to meet their basic needs and address barriers so that all community members can live with dignity, engage actively, and contribute to their community.

Central Outcome	Description
Cross Sectoral Trust and Collaboration	In a complex environment like the Downtown East, communication between sectors is vital to ensure common understanding of trends, needs in the community, and opportunities to coordinate and streamline responses. Intentional work to build trust and set common goals among diverse partners in the area can create the right environment for proactive collaboration to address concerns. This means City divisions, service providers, institutions, businesses, residents and other community members as well as other levels of government share information and data, plan collectively, and problem solve issues as they arise.
Stability for People experiencing Marginalization	Individual stability is achieved when people who are marginalized are able to consistently access resources that meet their basic needs, have support systems available to them including supports to connect to services, and are supported to make decisions and plans to improve their well-being in a way that maintains their dignity.
Model for a City Response to Complex Issues	A key outcome of the Action Plan is that it will identify effective models and practices to inform the City's response to community challenges in other parts of Toronto. New initiatives piloted as part of the Action Plan will be monitored for their ability to be replicated or scaled to other communities facing similar challenges. The Action Plan provides an opportunity to understand the impact of a concerted action and investment in a specific geography, and will be instructive in developing practices that can be leveraged in other areas of Toronto.

The Impact of COVID-19

As staff began implementation of the Action Plan, the COVID-19 global pandemic began. Toronto experienced deep impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic including decreased employment rates, business revenues, and retail occupancy ⁴ as well as increased levels of financial precarity and food insecurity. The pandemic exacerbated existing challenges in the Downtown East area and left many community members who face challenges at a heightened level of vulnerability. Emergency orders limited access to services and supportive spaces to address basic needs and necessitated additional interventions to support communities, particularly community members who are marginalized.

4 <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-159236.pdf>
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Collaboration and Coordination during Covid-19

The provincial emergency orders and associated shutdowns resulted in an additional focus of City efforts to address pandemic-emergency related impacts. This focus spurred Social Development, Finance and Administration Division to initiate the TO Supports: COVID-19 Equity Action Plan, a guiding framework of equity measures developed and implemented since March 2020 to support Torontonians disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.⁵ A range of financial supports, interventions and responses were launched across the city including in the Downtown East area to support the most vulnerable members of the community. Examples of the City's response are noted below.

The Downtown East Community Cluster:

In March 2020, the City of Toronto and United Way Greater Toronto developed the Community Coordination Plan as a community response initiative to address the urgent needs of vulnerable people during the pandemic. The Community Coordination Plan was designed to facilitate service coordination between community agencies, the City and the United Way, to support the vulnerable individuals and families. The Downtown East Cluster comprised of 43 community agencies.

Issues were addressed by the cluster and escalated for City response as needed. The cluster provided access to vital personal safety resources, with over 30,000 donated masks, face shields and hand sanitizer containers. The cluster also coordinated thousands of meals, as well as grant opportunities and working groups. Other supported projects included: peer to peer mental health and wellness project, funding for a group of agencies leading the distribution of donated warm clothing items and internet enabled devices to homeless, precariously housed and vulnerable residents. The Downtown East Cluster continues to meet bi-weekly to share information, support agency collaboration, and address complex local issues.

Downtown East Vaccine Engagement Team:

A Downtown East Vaccine Engagement Team has also provided supports including clinics, service navigation, access to vaccine resources, and public health messaging in the area. The Vaccine Engagement Team and Community Ambassadors spent over 4,200 hours building vaccine confidence and engaging with community members in the Downtown East area from March 2021 to March 2022.

Emergency Food Response:

Data from the *Who's Hungry 2021 report*⁶ indicated that there were 1.45 million visits to Toronto food banks from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, the highest number of visits

5 HL24.1: TO Supports: COVID-19 Equity Action Plan - <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.HL24.1>

6 The Who's Hungry report indicates that there was a 47% increase in food bank visits compared to the previous year, 1.5 times higher than the previous record set in 2010 at the peak of the 2008 recession. Source: Daily Bread Food Bank and North York Harvest Food Bank, *Who's Hungry 2021 From Crisis to Resilience: A City's Call to Action*, DB-WhosHungryReport-2021-FINAL.pdf (dailybread.ca), p. 6
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ever recorded in Toronto. Due to a pre-existing high level of vulnerability in the area, many of the impacts of COVID-19 were compounded, or increasingly visible in the Downtown East. In response to need, the City established a table of City staff and community agencies to support food banks and emergency food programs, address space and funding needs, including donation matching, and support community kitchens preparing meals for delivery to individuals and agencies.

Through the TO Supports Investment Fund, \$555,000 was directed to organizations working in the Downtown East as part of \$5.1 million in funding for community-driven food security initiatives across the city. Supported initiatives include: food banks, emergency food delivery, prepared meals, emergency food vouchers, and food handling certification. Provision of culturally appropriate food staples and meals were prioritized. The City also partnered with an Indigenous food sovereignty group to prepare and distribute appropriate food options for individuals who are Indigenous and vulnerable. City-wide organizations funded through the TO Supports Investment Fund also provided food-related programming and services in the Downtown East.

Lockdowns and capacity restrictions resulted in significant reductions in indoor space available for drop-in programs. All but three of 19 area drop-ins moved to providing take-away meals. Issues were raised at the Downtown East Cluster in the fall of 2020 about the pressures on these sites. In response, two pilot projects were supported through the Action Plan receiving \$155,000 in total to coordinate food distribution and supports for individuals who were housed but vulnerable. One pilot led by local agencies in collaboration with five local drop-ins provided over 200 prepared meals, wellness checks and referrals weekly for vulnerable individuals at heightened risk of COVID-19. The second pilot led by two local agencies working with food bank networks delivered 100 grocery hampers to seniors and other vulnerable populations weekly from January to June 2021.

The City's food response during the COVID-19 pandemic leveraged the many community agencies across the city that lead programs and initiatives to respond to significant need for food supports in the community. These community sector actions continue to provide vital support to people who are vulnerable and marginalized.

Leveraging City Infrastructure to Support Community:

Throughout the pandemic, City facilities were activated to support the needs of vulnerable community members. Parks, Forestry and Recreation shifted programs and services in response to needs emerging from COVID-19 while community centres were closed to programming. Fully accessible community centres were made available for COVID-19 testing, flu immunization, COVID-19 immunization and food distribution. For example, staff from the Wellesley Community Centre worked with local organizations, Sherbourne Health and the St. James Town Community Co-op's OASIS Food Hub on COVID-19 immunization clinics and food security initiatives for the local community. A temporary hygiene centre was also opened by the 519 Community Centre, an agency of the City in the Church Wellesley community in response to an urgent need for hygiene facilities identified during the early closures of the pandemic.

Monitoring the Impact of COVID-19

A survey was launched for agencies leading the implementation of some actions in the Action Plan to understand the realities of undertaking this work during the pandemic. The survey findings revealed some common themes including:

- Agencies assess that they have achieved gains in creating a safer and more inclusive community. This assessment was supported by performance monitoring data collected by the agencies.
- Staff and client mental health has continued to suffer throughout the pandemic in spite of greater recognition and supports, and has been exacerbated by the drug poisoning crisis.
- The work is very difficult and agencies struggle to secure sufficient funding to employ and retain skilled staff.
- Most of the outreach workers indicated that more housing options are required to stabilize the most vulnerable people experiencing marginalization.
- The lack of options for referrals is increasing the stress of the workers and increasing tension and lack of trust with clients, further impacting staff retention and mental health.

The pandemic has had a deep effect on the city and its communities. From a positive lens, it has driven innovation, collaborative action and coordination, often out of necessity. At the same time, challenging situations and pre-existing vulnerabilities have been exacerbated. The learnings from this period need to be carried forward and considered as the implementation of the Action Plan continues.

Action Plan Implementation Highlights

The implementation of the Downtown East Five Year Action Plan commenced in July 2019, and deepened following the approval of resources to support implementation through the City budget process in March 2020. The COVID-19 emergency delayed the advancement of some actions in the Work Plan as capacity was strained across the community and meeting critical emerging needs such as access to food, medical needs and vital safety resources was a priority. In the case of the City, this priority necessitated the redeployment of City staff to develop and implement emergency responses. In spite of this, the majority of actions in the Work Plan have been advanced. The work is often overlapping in nature with each initiative often affecting more than one outcome that will yield benefits to the Downtown East area.

Progress Highlights include:

- Four intervention pilots initiated with funding of \$1.1M providing intensive supports to people experiencing marginalization and supporting communities with alternative responses to issues. Further details are provided in Table 2 below.
- Continued funding support of \$150,000 per year for the Community Engagement Team led by the Downtown Yonge BIA providing response and de-escalation supports in the Yonge Dundas area.
- Trauma-informed trainings with an investment of \$0.041M reaching over 1,200 people since 2020 to better support and equip frontline staff with tools to provide support to people experiencing marginalization. The trainings included two resident focused sessions providing 70 residents with strategies to address vicarious trauma during COVID-19.

- A two year grants stream of \$1M (total) to support community agencies and resident groups in activating projects that align with the central outcomes of the Action plan. This grant stream ends in 2022. Attachment B provides further details.
- Community based research initiatives were completed, including a project assessing the mental wellness support needs of frontline staff, then piloting and evaluating the value of intensive counselling in the context of issues of COVID-19, homelessness and the opioid and drug poisoning crisis. Another project examined the challenging issue of housing unit takeovers in the area and supported the establishment of a strong community of practice to combat the issue by providing training, and identifying indicators of vulnerability and mechanisms for response.
- Strong mechanisms for cross-sectoral communication and collaboration developed including the Yonge Dundas Leadership Table to consider and strategically respond to issues and the Yonge Dundas Operations Table to coordinate outreach and safety responses to emerging issues in the area.
- Launch of an accelerator 90 Day Action Plan in collaboration with the Yonge Dundas Leadership Table addressing actions such as enhanced area clean-up services, by-law enforcement, coordinated outreach and ongoing encampment response in Trinity Square and other hot spots.
- Collaboration with the Ministry of the Attorney General to launch the Toronto Downtown East Justice Centre pilot in June 2021 focussing on preventing high-needs individuals at the intersection of poverty, homelessness, isolation, mental health and addictions from cycling through the criminal justice system by addressing criminogenic risk factors with on-site, wrap-around psychiatric, primary care and addictions medicine and supports for development disability
- Evaluating the levels of trust and collaboration amongst various stakeholders in the Downtown East with recommendations for how the Action Plan can better support trust and collaboration going forward. The findings of this work has informed the next steps outlined in this report.

Greater details of the progress on the Work Plan actions and actions resulting from Council direction with the approval of the Action Plan are noted in Attachment A.

Leveraging Collective Action to Advance Action Plan Outcomes

The implementation of the Action Plan to date has shown the positive results from cross-sectoral collaborative efforts that leverage the authority of involved partners. Specific examples are noted below:

a. Local Multi-Sector Planning and Response

Since June 2019, the Yonge Dundas Leadership Table, a strategic table of partners, has been convened by the City's Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services. Composed of leaders from the local Business Improvement Area, community agencies, health care and academic institutions and senior leadership from a number of City divisions, this group focuses on strategic coordination and planning in response to complex issues in the Yonge Dundas area and broader displacement of issues across the Downtown East.

Social Development, Finance and Administration also convenes a bi-weekly meeting to coordinate outreach and safety responses to emerging issues in the area and inform each other of new issues, programmatic solutions and opportunities to work together. Actions have included: Service and hot-spot mapping, and establishing coordinated outreach teams, now with multiple regular shifts engaging City and community agencies staff, the Downtown Yonge BIA's outreach team, TTC and other. Recently, this group has implemented a 90 Day Plan to reset conditions in the area while services continue to be provided to ensure that improvements to area conditions are maintained.

Social Development, Finance and Administration is also convening a planning table for the Dundas and Sherbourne neighbourhood as part of the process of establishing the Community Development Plan for this community. Consultations and engagement with community members, particularly Indigenous, Black and equity deserving communities and those with lived experience of marginalization will be part of implementation actions in 2022 and 2023.

b. New investments to support the community

Starting in 2020, four new initiatives were piloted through the Action Plan with funding in the amount of \$1.1M. These initiatives responded to pre-existing challenges in the community which have been exacerbated during COVID-19: the need for services accessible for community members faced with safety concerns, and the need for de-escalation supports for community members who are experiencing crisis. Investments support two outcomes of the Action Plan: Safe, Inclusive Communities and Stability for people who are marginalized. Table 2 provides highlights of this investment.

Table 2: Snapshot of Four Funded Intervention Pilot Initiatives:

Name	Community Outreach and Support Team	Here to Help	Harm Reduction Community Care Project	Equitable Action for Change
Service Description	Low barrier, outreach based intensive case management services for individuals with multiple barriers to supports	Multi-disciplinary team providing timely de-escalation and crisis intervention in response to calls from concerned community members	Peer employment program providing clean up and safe disposal of harm reduction supplies	Black-led and serving agency providing low barrier harm reduction, crisis support and referral services, weekend and evening outreach, particularly for individuals who identify as Indigenous, Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQ+
Timeframe	March 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022	April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022	Feb. 1, 2021 – Feb. 1, 2022	Feb. 3, 2022 – April 29, 2022

Name	Community Outreach and Support Team	Here to Help	Harm Reduction Community Care Project	Equitable Action for Change
Coverage Area	Dundas-Sherbourne, and since January 2022, Church-Wellesley and Yonge-Dundas	Dundas-Sherbourne / Moss Park, Church-Wellesley	Downtown East	Downtown East
Outreach Activities	Referrals Case management Harm reduction services Distribution of supplies	Referrals Practical and substance abuse supports Responding to crisis calls and visits	Street canvassing for used and discarded harm supplies for safe disposal; Responding to collection and safe disposal of discarded requests from the community	Referrals Harm reduction services Distribution of supplies
Outcome Measures	Increased timely and appropriate responses to local concerns; Reduced barriers to access and navigate local resources; Increased number of marginalized people connected to appropriate supports and moving out of vulnerability	Increased timely and appropriate responses to local concerns; Increased public awareness of appropriate and available responses for safety issues; Increased impactful collaborations among stakeholders	Increased timely and appropriate responses to local concerns; Decreased number of improperly disposed sharps/drug use supplies	Increased timely and appropriate responses to local concerns; Reduced barriers to access and navigate local resources
Data	5-30 engaged people per shift; 1170 harm reduction kits distributed; 102 referrals made, including 52 for intensive case management	1805 crisis visits: 1188 in Church Wellesley; 617 in Moss Park, 302 crisis calls: 209 in Church Wellesley; 93 in Moss Park. Over 50% of calls from businesses	5280 hours of low barrier employment for 19 individuals with lived experience; 400 cleanups totalling 4,342 hours; Pickup of 19,891 harm reduction supplies, including 4,575 used syringes; Average of 75 items collected per day	Over 1000 people engaged; Over 1000 referrals; Over 3000 people provided with supplies (e.g. personal hygiene supplies, harm reduction kits)

c. Cross-Sectoral Outreach Coordination

One issue raised in the development of the Action Plan was the desire for a coordination mechanism for outreach teams. Outreach coordination is underway with multiple partners including the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area's Downtown East Action Plan - Implementation Progress and Next Steps

Community Engagement Team, community agencies, Toronto Public Health's outreach teams, Streets to Homes staff as well as teams from Toronto Metropolitan University, the Toronto Transit Commission, and Community Paramedicine who identify people in need and provide referrals for specific services.

Toronto Public Health's outreach teams through The Works has also been performing paired outreach with other agencies and departments that work with people who use drugs with the goal to increase safety in the Downtown East core. These paired groups include members from The Works team and Streets to Homes, Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area outreach team and the safety team at the Toronto Metropolitan University. Staff from The Works have approximately 45 client interactions in a given week and have reported the following results: increased collaboration on high needs outreach locations; the opportunity to develop unique strategies to assist high needs clients in the area; developing relationships with other teams which has enhanced the support to the community.

d. Downtown East Housing Strategy

City Council recently directed staff to begin the development of a Downtown East Housing Strategy to connect many housing initiatives and developments planned and underway in the area, including affordable and supportive housing developments. Details of select current developments are outlined in Table 3.

The Downtown East Housing Strategy will expand upon the housing-focussed actions initially launched through the Downtown East Five-Year Action Plan. It will establish specific targets based on a data-driven understanding of the need for more diverse and affordable housing options, ranging from supportive housing, social housing, affordable rental housing, to market rental, and affordable ownership. The Downtown East Housing Strategy will inform future decision-making when considering new investments in housing and services.

Table 3: Select Current Housing Developments included in the Downtown East Housing Strategy

Site	Description and status
George Street Revitalization	The George Street Revitalization is the replacement of the men's shelter, Seaton House, with a state-of-the-art long term care centre, a new transitional living facility, a small emergency shelter, supportive housing units and a community hub.
292-296 Parliament Street	This recently renovated site is providing 24 large units of new, permanent affordable housing with onsite support services, operated by St. Jude Community Homes. In partnership with the Ministry of the Attorney General, the City is also providing space at this site to house the Downtown East Justice Centre pilot.

Site	Description and status
405 Sherbourne Street	This Housing Now site will be a 26-storey mixed-use building with 267 rental units, of which a minimum of 33% will be provided as new affordable rental. In addition, staff are exploring opportunities to create 40 units of supportive housing onsite as part of the overall 267 rental units. The City is expected to seek a non-profit housing provider to develop this site by the third quarter of 2022.
Dan Harrison Community Complex	A master planning and community visioning exercise will support the future vision of Dan Harrison, a Toronto Community Housing complex, in order to improve neighbourhood safety and provide the level of services required for local residents, while offering high-quality homes and pursuing additional density. A report back on this work will be brought forward to the Planning and Housing Committee in the fourth quarter of 2023.
353-355 Sherbourne Street and 157 Carlton Street	St Luke's United Church is partnering with the United Property Resource Corporation on a proposal to construct a 12-storey residential building containing 100 residential units while conserving part of the church. A total of 30% of the units will be affordable rental units and 70% will be market rental. A final report on the application will be considered by Toronto and East York Community Council on June 29, 2022.

While positive actions have been implemented to date, they exist in the context of the significant size of the Downtown East area, the range of issues throughout the area and the entrenched nature of the challenges. Investments have been made in the area through the Downtown East Action Plan, the City's COVID-19 supports and other investments, however the need is large and there are deep seeded challenges that persist. These include growing rates of food insecurity, financial precarity for local businesses, the drug toxicity crisis, access to drug treatment; and the need for appropriate responses to individuals with complex mental health needs, particularly individuals who refuse service.

Next Steps

Since the development and approval of the Action Plan in 2019, there have been important developments in City policies and programs, including:

- The adoption of the Reconciliation Action Plan, a plan that will guide the City's actions to advance truth, justice and reconciliation for the next 10 years, building on existing commitments to Indigenous Peoples with 28 actions over five themes.
- The continued implementation of Toronto's Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism including the approval of a Black Food Sovereignty Plan and actions to advance housing affordability options to better address the overrepresentation of under housed and homeless Black Torontonians.

- The approval of SafeTO, the City's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan, informed by ongoing innovations mobilized through the Downtown East Action Plan and consultations with stakeholders throughout the Downtown East including the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area who partnered with the City to consult the business community and Business Improvement Areas across the City.
- The launch of the Toronto Community Crisis Service, a new alternative to police response providing a community-based, client centred, trauma-informed response to non-emergency mental health crisis calls. This innovative service includes a team focused on the Downtown East.

The effects of these changes on the Action Plan need to be considered and factored in as part of the next phase of implementation.

The next phase of work will involve assessment and deeper engagement to identify new issues and concerns, validate the appropriateness of current actions and determine opportunities to advance additional coordinated action in the area as the City moves into a phase of recovery and rebuild from the pandemic.

Specific actions in this next phase of implementation include the following:

Engagement and Communications

Although some engagement has occurred with members of the community including residents, businesses owners and operators, people with lived experience of marginalization, the pandemic has impacted these efforts. More fulsome engagement will be undertaken in this next phase including:

- Focused engagement with Indigenous communities exploring opportunities for meaningful action with and for First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities in the area. A Request for Proposals to engage an Indigenous facilitator for this process will be launched in summer 2022.
- Establishing a model for ongoing engagement and communications with community members in the Downtown East area, including individuals who are Indigenous, Black, or equity deserving, individuals who are marginalized, area residents, service providers and the private sector.
- Broader engagement with a range of community members on the Dundas Sherbourne Plan.
- Launching a People with Lived Experience Advisory for the Action Plan.

Continuing the Funded Intervention Initiatives and City Service Level Enhancements:

- Since the early implementation of the response in the Downtown East area, the actions such as service level enhancements and targeted intervention investments have yielded positive results. These actions are recommended to continue in this next phase. In addition, the ways that these initiatives may be impacted by new services in the community, particularly the Toronto Community Crisis Service, will be assessed and considered.

Supporting Lived Experience, Mental Health and Equity Capacity Building:

- Initiatives will continue to be advanced providing free training and education for agency staff to increase the capacity to identify and work with people who have experienced, or are experiencing brain injuries, crystal meth awareness and mental health first aid, as well as increasing supports for Black staff.
- This work has also identified opportunities for People with Lived Experience to be advanced in the future. These opportunities will require resources to support collaborative work, including outcome measurements to begin to address systemic gaps in supporting community members experiencing systemic vulnerability.

Continuing Intergovernmental Dialogue:

Where the City and our partners have been leveraging their resources and tools, positive impact is resulting. However, some of the complex, entrenched needs of the community go beyond City levers: the need for more affordable supportive housing options, particularly options that are suitable for individuals with multiple complex needs; the impact of drug dealing and related community violence. The City and community partners cannot resolve these issues alone. Addressing the complex challenges in the area will require additional investment combined with long term, multi-sectoral approaches that include all levels of government, especially in terms of:

- health, including mental health, investments both capital and operating, that align with the critical needs of the city's vulnerable communities, particularly wraparound responses and options for those experiencing mental health, developmental disabilities or substance use challenges; and,
- supportive housing and housing stability program investments to align with the principles and goals of the Downtown East Housing Strategy and the HousingTO 2020 - 2030 Action Plan.

Continued Monitoring and Evaluation of the Action Plan:

- The Action Plan identifies data measures to support the outcomes of the work. Some of this data is being collected through community partners and through funded initiatives. This area of ongoing work will be deepened and will include both quantifiable metrics, and also qualitative evaluations such as facilitated peer focus groups, surveys and community consultations.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the funded outreach initiatives and evaluation of program impacts will also continue and be advanced. This will include working with other strategies and initiatives such as SafeTO to identify and leverage priority datasets to track change in the community over time.

Collectively, the actions noted above will inform the development of Phase Two of the Action Plan. This report recommends that a report back on the progress of implementation activities and recommendations for Phase Two of the Downtown East Action Plan be brought forward in Q3 2023.

CONTACT

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Downtown East Five Year Action Plan: 2022 Progress Update
Attachment B: Downtown East Action Plan Grant - Summary of Outcomes