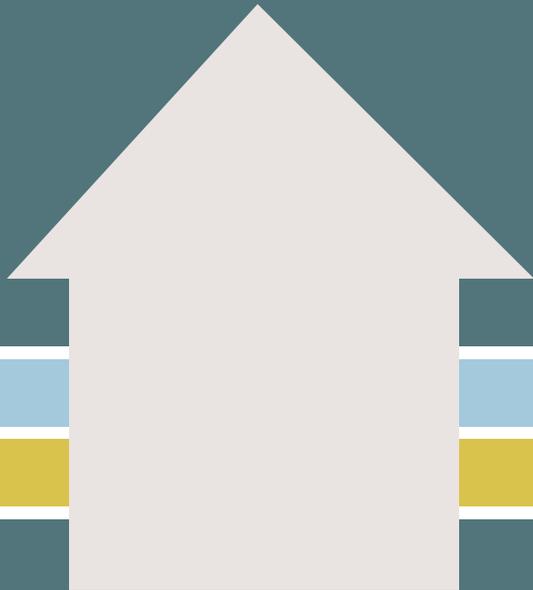
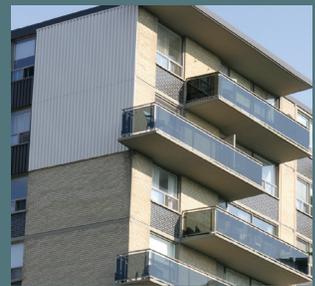


2014 to 2019



# Housing Stability Service Planning Framework

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2014-2019 Housing Stability Service Planning Framework will help shape the transformation of Toronto's housing and homelessness services into an integrated, client-centered, outcome-focused service system that will enable residents to remain in their homes longer and improve their well-being. It will guide Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), other City divisions, and the community partners on which it depends in the planning, management, and delivery of SSHA's full range of housing and homelessness services over the next five years as we transition from a system that is now primarily focused on the administration of social housing programs and emergency responses to homelessness.

This work builds on the policy directions in *Housing Opportunities Toronto: An Affordable Housing Action Plan, 2010-2020* (HOT Plan). Approved by City Council in 2009, the HOT Plan is the roadmap for the City's policy-work and investment decisions aimed at providing housing opportunities for everyone. The overarching goal that emerges from this Framework is to improve housing stability for vulnerable Toronto residents. Consistent with Toronto's Housing Charter, this Framework defines housing stability as having a place to live that is affordable, safe, secure, healthy, comfortable, and located in a neighbourhood of choice as well as being able to access and keep housing as one's needs change over time.

More than 2,000 voices were heard through the Toronto Housing Services Consultations, the result of an extensive engagement process that included a public opinion poll, online surveys, focus groups, in-person discussion sessions and key informant interviews. Key themes to emerge from the consultations include:

- Housing affordability is a key issue and concern for many Torontonians and is compounded by the lack of availability and new construction of affordable housing
- Need for access to a diverse range of affordable housing opportunities with client-centered supports
- The importance of housing follow-up supports to support increased housing stability
- The importance of homelessness prevention and the need to prioritize it within service planning
- The importance of more partnerships and better collaboration between service providers, service sectors and government to support effective and innovative solutions.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

The context of funding relationships with other orders of government, socio-economic and demographic trends in the city, and service sector trends is changing, including:

- Less funding available for social housing and for housing and homelessness services
- Increased demand for emergency shelter
- An increase in people experiencing outdoor homelessness
- An increasingly unaffordable housing market characterised by rents that are rising faster than social assistance payments and minimum wage rates and falling rental vacancy rates
- An insufficient number of subsidized or social housing units to meet demand

- Limited amount of new affordable housing being built
- Emerging service needs among equity seeking groups including women, seniors, Aboriginal People and LGBTQ youth
- A growing and aging population in Toronto.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2014-2019

Seven strategic directions are each linked to a set of key actions that will support and strengthen programs and the service delivery system. The key actions are based on our research, analysis, and input from stakeholders including clients, community partner agencies including housing providers, the public, and City staff. They are summarized here.

Program Transformation Directions	
Strategic Directions	Key Actions
<p><b>1. Preventing homelessness</b></p> <p>Providing services to help people keep their housing or find housing better suited to their needs is one of the best ways to reduce homelessness. Preventing homelessness requires not only collaboration with a wide range of service providers but also effective, timely, and appropriate service interventions tailored to the individual needs of clients.</p>	<p>1.1 Develop a comprehensive eviction prevention strategy that builds on relationships with TCH, non-profit and cooperative housing providers, private-sector landlords, community partner service agencies and other City divisions that encounter vulnerable households.</p> <p>1.2 Develop partnerships with the health care, child welfare and corrections systems to coordinate transition planning strategies that prevent people from being discharged from other service systems into homelessness.</p> <p>1.3 Drawing from best practices, identify priorities and resource requirements to improve the effectiveness of housing follow-up support services aimed at achieving stable and successful tenancies.</p> <p>1.4 Leverage investments in community-based programs that increase community connectivity, social integration, and economic well-being in order to support successful tenancies.</p>
<p><b>2. Supporting the transition to housing</b></p> <p>Building on the Housing First approach, SSHA will seek to transform services for those</p>	<p>2.1 Refocus the Streets to Homes program to ensure program resources are best targeted to helping persons living without shelter find and maintain housing.</p> <p>2.2 Develop a service delivery model in consultation with community and other service partners that</p>

<p>experiencing homelessness from strictly temporary solutions to those focused on supporting a transition to permanent, stable housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensures every person entering the emergency shelter system has an individualized service plan in place and supports to move out of the shelter and into housing within a defined timeframe</li> <li>• addresses the complex needs of clients who stay in shelters longer than one year.</li> </ul> <p>2.3 Develop a new shelter funding model in consultation with shelter providers that is predictable and performance based with a continued focus on moving shelter users into appropriate housing as quickly as possible.</p>
<p><b>3. Creating housing opportunities</b></p> <p>SSHA has an important role to play in creating new housing opportunities for vulnerable Toronto households by working with private sector landlords as well as affordable and social housing providers, providing direct financial assistance to increase affordability and by pursuing reforms to outdated policies and systems that may no longer meet today's housing needs.</p>	<p>3.1 Create a permanent housing allowance program to help address housing affordability challenges.</p> <p>3.2 Create a proactive, coordinated access system for social and affordable housing, consistent with Council direction, by implementing changes to City policies, modernizing system administration and empowering applicants with better information and more choices.</p> <p>3.3 Develop a strategy that leverages existing shelter and housing assets to create a range of housing types and supports to meet the diverse and changing needs of households as they transition to housing stability.</p> <p>3.4 Develop a strategy to work with private-sector landlords to create new points of entry to housing for clients experiencing homelessness or affordability issues and to help resolve tenancy issues.</p> <p>3.5 Review the service-level standards and rules governing the administration of rent-geared-to-income housing and develop recommendations for a standard that is inclusive of a range of City-administered housing options.</p>
<p><b>System Transformation Directions</b></p>	
<p><b>Strategic Directions</b></p>	<p><b>Key Actions</b></p>
<p><b>4. Fostering system stewardship and innovation</b></p>	<p>4.1 Protect and leverage public investments in social housing by</p>

<p>SSHA will pursue opportunities for system innovation, review and implement appropriate accountability measures, and protect and invest in assets over the long term. It will be an effective steward of the housing stability service system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a strategic framework for continued operation of social housing projects whose operating agreements are expiring</li> <li>• continuing to support implementation of the recommendations of the Special Housing Working Group and Council's ten year capital financing plan for TCH</li> <li>• developing a social housing asset management and capital renewal program that supports non-profit and co-operative housing providers</li> <li>• supporting the City's advocacy with other orders of government to create a sustainable funding program for the social housing portfolio.</li> </ul> <p>4.2 Address the long-term sustainability of the shelter system through the development of a ten year capital management and infrastructure strategy that supports the maintenance and redevelopment of the shelter sites city-wide and is sensitive to changing and diverse needs of people who are homeless.</p> <p>4.3 Strengthen program administration by improving contract management, program monitoring and accountability practices.</p>
<p><b>5. Improving access and equity</b></p> <p>All Torontonians have a right to access housing and homelessness services that address their needs, without being disadvantaged as a result of identity, ability or where they reside in the city. SSHA is committed to ensuring that all households are treated in a fair and equitable manner when seeking housing assistance.</p>	<p>5.1 Ensure information about services and resources is easy to access, up to date, and accessible to all clients.</p> <p>5.2 Develop comprehensive strategies to ensure that housing services are responsive to the needs of specific client groups including women, seniors and older adults, Aboriginal People, LGBTQ, and people with substance use and/or mental health issues.</p> <p>5.3 In consultation with community partners, improve shelter access and service outcomes by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthening the existing centralized access system for shelter services</li> <li>• developing a co-ordinated, outcome-focused needs assessment system for clients accessing shelter services.</li> </ul> <p>5.4 Develop an occupancy policy for the shelter system to ensure all people experiencing homelessness seeking a</p>

	<p>bed can be accommodated in a timely manner that respects client diversity and choice to the greatest extent possible.</p> <p>5.5 In consultation with community partners, service users and other stakeholders, develop a harm reduction framework for shelter services that enhances client access and choice.</p>
<p><b>6. Delivering high quality service</b></p> <p>All clients are entitled to respectful and considerate treatment by SSHA and related service providers, from the individual receiving support in moving off the street to the family seeking to register for the social housing waiting list. SSHA will work with community partners to ensure that all City, agency and housing provider staff deliver high quality customer service.</p>	<p>6.1 Implement an SSHA People Plan including a recruitment strategy, staff training, customer service standards and initiatives that boost employee health and wellness in the workplace including strategies to mitigate the negative health impacts of working in highly stressful environments.</p> <p>6.2 Review and update the current Shelter Standards to provide shelter operators and clients with a clear set of guidelines and expectations for the provision of shelter services to ensure services are delivered in ways that are client-centered and respect client diversity.</p> <p>6.3 Improve the collection and reporting of service information by developing detailed performance indicators that define and measure the achievements of service goals and objectives.</p> <p>6.4 Expand the capacity of the Shelter Management Information System (SMIS) as a City-wide housing services management information system.</p> <p>6.5 Continue to monitor best practices and research in the field of housing and homelessness and apply this knowledge as necessary to programs and services in Toronto.</p>
<p><b>7. Strengthening partnerships and coordination</b></p> <p>Partnership and collaboration between SSHA and a wide range of community sector agencies and service providers are key and critical components of the service</p>	<p>7.1 Support and help foster local capacity building initiatives that promote coordination among community partner agencies.</p> <p>7.2 Explore ways to improve service coordination with community partner agencies and other City divisions working with vulnerable persons or with mutual interests such as the Affordable Housing Office,</p>

<p>system. SSHA will engage on ways to enhance service delivery by leveraging existing opportunities, identify service needs and gaps, implementing best practices.</p>	<p>Employment &amp; Social Services, Children's Services, Municipal Licensing &amp; Standards, and City Planning.</p> <p>7.3 Increase coordination with the health care system and City divisions such as Toronto Public Health and Long-Term Care Homes &amp; Services to better connect vulnerable people experiencing homelessness to appropriate services.</p> <p>7.4 Increase and enhance engagement opportunities through the development of a community engagement framework to support ongoing service planning.</p> <p>7.5 Partner on research initiatives to support evidence-based policy development.</p>
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The seven strategic directions will help address opportunities and challenges in housing and homelessness service delivery facing Toronto over the next few years. Actions and new initiatives undertaken by SSHA over the next five years will support and strengthen these directions and be consistent with this framework.

Service planning is a continual and ongoing process. At the end of five years, the goal is to achieve improved service quality, increased access to services, strengthened partnerships, and better coordination between service providers including the City, resulting in better outcomes for vulnerable, low-income Torontonians.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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This document contains a framework for the planning and provision of Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's (SSHA) full range of housing and homelessness services over the next five years that will strive to see a decline in homelessness and an improvement in the housing stability of vulnerable Torontonians.

Over the summer of 2013, SSHA heard more than 2,000 voices tell us that the system of services in place to help vulnerable people find and keep permanent housing was in need of repair. Input from clients, agency and City frontline and management staff that serve them, housing providers, and the general public clearly articulated that the City did a good job of reacting to emergencies — through such services as street outreach and Out-of-the-Cold meals — but that improvements are needed to better address longer-term housing stability needs.

The current services overseen by SSHA evolved in ad hoc responses to decades of intermittent and mostly decreasing funding, the resulting collage of programs and rules imposed by other orders of government, and the need to meet the changing needs of Toronto residents. As a result, there is insufficient integration of services at the same time that demand for housing services is rising as a fast-growing population struggles with increasing rents, declining vacancy rates, and increased difficulty in obtaining jobs that have the tenure and salary levels required for long-term housing stability in Toronto.

The timing to review and revise the system could not be better. There is agreement that supports to find and keep permanent housing are critical to vulnerable people in Toronto and to the city's liveability for everyone. Many thousands of people use this form of assistance, whether as a subsidized unit in social housing, a drop-in service to connect to services, assistance to find affordable housing through a Housing Help Centre, a Rent Bank loan, an emergency shelter bed, or on-site assistance and supports to daily living. Another almost 90,000 households remain underserved as they wait for a subsidized unit to become available. All this is happening while investments by other orders of government in social housing, eviction prevention services, and housing follow-up programs is declining. The good news is that municipalities are being handed more flexibility to respond to local needs, sharpened by the consolidation of program funding.

Mindful that system improvements can only be shaped and effectively operated with the ongoing collaboration with and among the community agencies that actually deliver many of the services, we will not move forward by destabilizing the status quo. Instead, this planning framework is intended to set a course for a gradual transformation of the system.

Several bedrock principles ground this framework—Housing First as an approach, service integration and coordination as a means, and improved information and access to services as a path. Seven strategic directions form the infrastructure upon which we intend to build priorities, actions and new initiatives over the next five years to transform the system and to move from a focus on emergency responses to homelessness to an integrated service system that will help people achieve greater housing stability.

## 2. OVERVIEW

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### 2.1. The HOT plan

Housing is fundamental to the well-being of individuals and families. It creates a foundation from which a household can prosper and grow. Freedom from constant worry about becoming homeless or maintaining decent housing without sacrificing other basic necessities is fundamental to residents reaching full potential. Housing is also foundational for the city to be a healthy, prosperous, vibrant, and great place to live for all residents.

In 2009, Toronto City Council adopted *Housing Opportunities Toronto: An Affordable Housing Action Plan, 2010-2020* (HOT). The plan is the roadmap for the City's policy-work and investment decisions to provide housing opportunities for all Torontonians. The HOT Plan is also the City's local ten year housing and homelessness plan, as required by the provincial government.

There are eight strategic themes that support the HOT Plan:

1. Create housing opportunities in all neighbourhoods
2. Help homeless and vulnerable people find and keep homes
3. Assist individuals and families to afford rents
4. Preserve and repair rental housing
5. Revitalize neighbourhoods
6. Create new affordable rental housing
7. Help people to buy and stay in their homes
8. Working together

A cornerstone of the HOT Plan is Council's policy statement taken directly from the Council-approved *Toronto Housing Charter – Opportunity for All*:

It is the policy of the City of Toronto that fair access to a full range of housing is fundamental to strengthening Toronto's economy, its environmental efforts, and the health and social well-being of its residents and communities.

In that regard:

All residents should have a safe, secure, affordable and well-maintained home from which to realize their full potential.

All residents should be able to live in their neighbourhood of choice without discrimination.

All residents, regardless of whether they rent or own a home, or are homeless, have an equal stake and voice in Toronto's future.

All residents have the right to equal treatment in housing without discrimination as provided by the Ontario Human Rights Code, and to be protected from discriminatory practices which limit their housing opportunities.

All housing in Toronto should be maintained and operated in a good and safe state of repair.

## **2.2. What is housing stability?**

Providing opportunities for all Torontonians to live in places that are affordable, safe, secure, healthy, and comfortable, without discrimination and located in a neighbourhood of choice is the overarching goal of the HOT Plan and of the work we do at the City. This is what we mean by housing stability.

Housing stability builds on a Housing First service approach which helps people find permanent housing as quickly as possible and provides the necessary supports to keep housing. But housing stability is also about more than just finding housing. It means being able to access and keep housing over time as one's needs change. Social integration and economic well-being are also key pillars contributing to housing stability as they increase a person's connection to his or her community and overall wellbeing.

The vision of helping Torontonians achieve greater housing stability is the starting place for this service planning process. It anchors a new approach for the delivery of housing and homelessness services in the City by taking into account that integrated responses are needed to address housing and homelessness challenges. This creates new opportunities to move beyond traditional, emergency-based solutions towards more personalized, holistic responses that are client-centered and focused on meeting individual needs.

## **2.3. Housing and homelessness services in Toronto**

The City of Toronto provides a wide range of housing and homelessness services intended to support all Torontonians to achieve housing stability. At least half a dozen City divisions are involved, to varying degrees, in the delivery of these services.

SSHA is the division with primary responsibility for increasing housing stability for low-income and vulnerable residents by investing directly in a range of housing and homelessness services designed to help people find and keep permanent housing.

But the Affordable Housing Office (AHO), Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) and other City divisions also contribute to housing stability among Toronto residents. Their services include developing new affordable housing, social assistance and other income support payments, work preparation and job finding assistance, public health and recreation programs, and childcare subsidies. In addition, policies such as the Toronto Official Plan which sets out

Council's long-term vision for growth and development in the City and by-laws administered and enforced by City Planning and Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) play a key role in regulating the supply and quality of housing options in Toronto.

## 2.4. The need for a Service Planning Framework for SSHA

Since amalgamation in Toronto in 1998, SSHA has delivered housing and homelessness services that have been shaped by five key factors:

1. City Council's approval of the HOT Plan and its policy objectives and strategic targets for housing services and the creation of new affordable housing.
2. The constraints on service planning and integration imposed by a prescriptive, uncoordinated, and at times conflicting framework of funding programs from other orders of government with various statutory requirements, and legacy agreements that often led to silos preventing integrated responses to locally specific challenges.
3. A lack of ongoing and consistent funding for critical services. Although periodic investments by the federal and provincial governments have contributed to the effectiveness of housing and homelessness services in Toronto, these funding initiatives have typically been unpredictable and rule-bound, and have made meaningful service planning very difficult.
4. Insufficient funding when there are new funding allocations. Several factors make the long-term outlook for federal and provincial funding uncertain as both governments continue to withdraw ongoing funds for housing programs placing an even greater burden on City property tax payers.
5. A demand for housing and homelessness services that currently outstrips funding and service availability, and is fueled by the downloading of responsibility, but not the funding, for social housing by both the federal and provincial governments, constraints in other program areas (e.g. social assistance), and rapidly increasing housing prices coupled with growing shortages of affordable housing.

The legacy of this context is the fragmented and incohesive service delivery system for housing and homelessness services that now exists in Toronto. In reality, the system that is managed by SSHA is a collection of separate service silos that have evolved in response to specific historic provincial, federal and municipal funding programs, some of which go back decades and few of which were created in harmony with others. Because the existing service system is fragmented and pushed by funding programs and rules, rather than by local needs and priorities, it lacks a unifying view. The housing and homelessness service system is thus facing a number of key challenges that impact service planning but also create opportunities to leverage existing resources and foster innovative and creative responses and solutions.

This Housing Stability Service Planning Framework aims to address this gap. It creates the opportunity to rethink the scope, purpose, and delivery of SSHA's existing housing and homelessness programs. Its purpose is to facilitate the transformation of Toronto's housing and homelessness services into an integrated, client-centered, outcome-focused service system that improves the ability of residents to find and remain in homes that are safe, secure and affordable. It will move us away from the existing loose network of legacy programs primarily focused on the administration of historic, downloaded social housing programs and emergency responses to homelessness.

**FIGURE 1 THE PURPOSE OF THE HOUSING STABILITY SERVICE PLANNING FRAMEWORK**



This planning framework will help SSHA to fulfill its legislated role as service system manager by guiding SSHA and its many partners in the planning, management and delivery of a full range of housing and homelessness services over the next five years. And it will help position SSHA to contribute more effectively to the implementation of Council's HOT plan.

## 3. WHAT WE KNOW

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This section describes the socio-economic, legislative and funding contexts within which the City delivers housing and homelessness services, and the current service delivery system in Toronto.

### 3.1. Socio-economic trends

The state of housing stability in Toronto reflects the changes to the city's demographic make-up and fluctuations in the economy. These affect housing availability, affordability, and homelessness. Between 2006 and 2011, Toronto's population grew by 4.5 percent – five times the population growth in the previous five year period for Toronto.

Toronto's population is also aging. The two fastest growing age groups identified in the latest Census are 60-64 year olds and people 85 years of age and older. Projections show this population increasing by one-third between 2011 and 2031.<sup>1</sup>

Changing labour markets in Toronto are also reducing housing stability across the city. It is difficult for many people to find a job and to maintain employment. At just over 8.5 percent, Toronto's unemployment rate is higher than the provincial and national rates.<sup>2</sup> In addition, overall job quality is falling, with full-time, well-paid manufacturing jobs being replaced by temporary, part-time and contract jobs that provide lower wages, less security and few, if any, benefits. In southern Ontario, at least 20 percent of those who are employed find themselves with this type of precarious employment, an increase of nearly 50 percent in the last 20 years.<sup>3</sup>

Poverty remains a persistent and difficult challenge within the city. Considerable research identifies the changing nature of income and poverty.<sup>4</sup> David Hulchanski's research on *The Three Cities within Toronto* (2010) shows that middle income neighbourhoods in Toronto shrank drastically from 1970 to 2005, while high- and low-income areas grew.<sup>5</sup> In 1970 two thirds of the neighbourhoods in Toronto were defined as middle income, compared to only 29 percent in 2005. During that same period, the proportion of high-income neighbourhoods grew from 15 percent to 19 percent, and low-income areas grew from 19 percent to 53 percent.

People who live in Toronto also continue to be poorer than those who live in the rest of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTAH). Indeed, they are more likely to have low incomes than those who live in the rest of Ontario and the rest of Canada as well. In 2010, 19 percent of the population had an after-tax income below Statistics Canada's Low Income Measure.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Toronto's Senior Strategy: Towards an Age-Friendly City*. City of Toronto. 2013.

<sup>2</sup> City of Toronto, Economic Indicators, September 2013.

<sup>3</sup> *It's More than Poverty*. United Way of Toronto and McMaster University. 2013.

<sup>4</sup> See Neighbourhood Change Research Partnership and Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario

<sup>5</sup> J. David Hulchanski, *The Three Cities Within Toronto: Income Polarization Among Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005*. University of Toronto, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> City of Toronto, 2011 National Household Survey Background, September 2013.

Income security programs that provide short-term support for people who are unemployed or unable to work are inadequate to pay Toronto rents, with rates frequently falling well below the poverty line and not indexed to the cost of living in Toronto.

All of these factors combine to shape the operating environment for services to help people find and keep housing in Toronto.

## 3.2. Housing and homelessness in Toronto

### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Many Toronto residents struggle to pay the rent. Paying 30 percent or more of one's income on rent or shelter costs (including mortgage payments, taxes, and repairs, etc.) is widely used as a measure of housing unaffordability. In Toronto, 43.5 percent of all renter households which represents 19.8 percent of total households spend 30 percent or more of their pre-tax income on rent. 27.6 percent of owner households also experience affordability issues.<sup>7</sup> Approximately two thirds of the renter households in the GTA with affordability challenges live in Toronto.<sup>8</sup>

According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), rents in Toronto continue to increase; the average bachelor unit cost \$840 a month in 2012, while a one bedroom unit was \$1,010 per month.<sup>9</sup> This means that someone working fulltime at minimum wage would be spending 57 percent of their gross monthly income on rent for a one bedroom unit, or 47 percent for a bachelor unit. Ontario Works pays individuals a maximum shelter benefit of \$376, less than half the amount needed for the average rent of a bachelor apartment in Toronto.<sup>10</sup>

Housing affordability is made worse by a low rental vacancy rate (1.7 percent in 2012), which makes affordable, safe, and suitable units even harder to find.<sup>11</sup> Toronto has one of the lowest rental vacancy rates among major Canadian centres and has experienced very low rates for the past 40 years with the exceptions of a few years in the mid-2000s.<sup>12</sup>

The City, especially through the activities of the AHO, continues working to increase the supply of affordable housing. In 2013, 1,641 new affordable rental and homeownership homes were under development utilizing federal-provincial-city investments. However, despite the City's best efforts, the new supply of affordable housing is inadequate to meet demand. The high cost of housing combined with low vacancy rates and a lack of new affordable opportunities has real impacts on individuals and families trying to make ends meet. For many it means going without basic necessities or needing to make difficult trade-offs between paying the rent and buying groceries.

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<sup>7</sup> City of Toronto, 2011 National Household Survey Backgrounder, September 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), CHS - Rental Market Survey, December 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Works Policy Directives, September 2013.

<sup>11</sup> The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), CHS - Rental Market Survey, December 2012.

<sup>12</sup> City of Toronto, Profile Toronto, Rental Housing Supply and Demand Indicators, City Planning Policy and Research, September 2006.

## HOMELESSNESS

While much has been done to address homelessness in Toronto, it continues to be a serious and persistent issue. The 2013 Street Needs Assessment results provide a detailed picture of the state of homelessness in Toronto. On April 17, 2013 there were an estimated 5,253 individuals experiencing homelessness on Toronto's streets, in the shelter system as well as hospitals, other treatment centres, and correctional facilities. Although the overall count is relatively stable with the previous Street Needs Assessment conducted in 2009, the estimated number of individuals sleeping outdoors increased by 24 percent to 477.

The indoor estimate was 4,776. Overall, about 76 percent of homeless people on April 17, 2013 were staying in City-administered shelters, 7 percent in provincially administered Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, 4 percent in health and treatment facilities, and 5 percent were incarcerated in Toronto-area detention centres.

The Street Needs Assessment provides a snapshot of the number of absolutely homeless people on one specific day. Many more people experience homelessness each year, even if only for a short time. In 2012, about 17,500 unique clients accessed the City administered shelter system.

There is a lot of diversity among people experiencing homelessness as demonstrated by the Street Needs Assessment and data on users of the City's emergency shelters. The Street Needs Assessment indicated that there is a persistently high representation of Aboriginal People among the homeless population. A number of key themes and challenges related to Aboriginal homelessness continue to emerge in the research such as substance abuse, discrimination and racism, and the perception that Aboriginal people who are experiencing homelessness are viewed as a lesser priority for services and support.

The Street Needs Assessment also indicates that there are emerging service needs among other client groups. For example, the homeless population is aging. Additionally, one in five homeless youth identified as members of the LGBTQ community. The duration of homelessness also varies between different sub-groups of the homeless population.

There is little information or data about the "hidden homeless" – those couch surfing, or staying temporarily with friends or family because they have no other option. It is difficult to estimate how large this group is as they are not necessarily using emergency services such as shelters.

### 3.3. Legislative and policy context

#### HOUSING SERVICES ACT, 2011

The City is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for housing and homelessness programs under the provincial *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA), which governs the administration and funding of social housing in Ontario. As Service Manager, the City is

responsible for planning, administering and delivering affordable and social housing programs and service initiatives that help individuals and families at-risk of or experiencing homelessness to find and maintain permanent housing. This includes the management and administration of rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance within its social housing portfolio. The City is required by the HSA to meet a legislatively defined "service level standard" for RGI subsidized units in Toronto.

The HSA was a welcomed replacement to the overly prescriptive *Social Housing Reform Act* which preceded it. In general, the HSA gives service managers more flexibility to meet local needs. This includes reducing some requirements for Ministerial Consents (i.e., provincial approval), for things such as easements and refinancing mortgages, so that municipalities can make locally relevant decisions and streamline administration. The HSA also provided service managers with the opportunity to modernize how they manage the waiting list for social housing, including new policies and systems to improve customer service and applicants' ability to make informed housing choices.

## **LONG-TERM AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY**

In November 2010, the provincial government released its Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) with a vision to improve Ontarians' access to adequate, suitable, and affordable housing. The centrepiece of the provincial strategy was to shift greater authority for housing and homelessness service planning to municipal governments under a more flexible provincial framework. This was consistent with a commitment in the final report of the Provincial Municipal Fiscal Service Delivery Review (PMFSDR) released two years earlier where it was noted that the Province and municipalities would work together towards consolidating the existing range of housing and homelessness programs into a single funding envelope to be managed at the municipal level as dictated by local needs. The LTAHS also includes the requirement under the HSA that municipalities create local ten year housing and homelessness plans. The City's ten year HOT Plan meets this legislative requirement.

### **3.4. Current funding environment**

SSHA's approved 2013 gross operating budget is \$665.6 million (\$225 million net).

With this budget, SSHA manages funding from all three orders of government and invests it through grants in housing and homelessness programs and through subsidies to social housing providers for social housing programs. SSHA currently directs approximately 70 percent of its gross budget to social housing.

## **COMMUNITY HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION INITIATIVE**

As part of its LTAHS, the provincial government recently consolidated funding from five previously separate provincial homelessness programs into a single funding envelope to allow municipalities to use funding in a more flexible manner, reflective of local need. Beginning this

year, the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) replaced existing funding in Ontario for emergency hostels, the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program, the Rent Bank, the Emergency Energy Fund and Domiciliary Hostels (Toronto does not have any of these).

But while the new CHPI program provides greater flexibility, there is less money for homelessness prevention services. This is because the Province eliminated the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) in the 2012 provincial budget. This funding helped individuals and families who receive social assistance to move into housing, reduced evictions and addressed other types of emergencies that may affect housing stability. Only 50 percent of the funding previously allocated to CSUMB in Ontario is now included in CHPI.

## **HOMELESSNESS PARTNERING STRATEGY**

The federal government has designated the City as the Community Entity under its Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) to select, administer and manage projects supported through that very important funding stream. The City has administered federal homelessness funding since 2000. HPS funding is used to provide programming that assists individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness, at-risk of homelessness or recently housed.

Although this is not permanent, ongoing funding, the federal government has maintained its commitment to investing in programs to prevent and reduce homelessness. In the 2013 budget the federal government announced the extension of HPS until March 2019. The renewed program will place an increased focus on a Housing First approach to address the needs of individuals experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness. While this represents a more prescriptive approach from the federal government, it is consistent with the Housing First approach embraced by the City since 2005.

## **INVESTMENT IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The 2013 federal budget also included a commitment to renew the joint federal-provincial Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) program for five years when it expires at the end of March 2014. While the federal and provincial governments have not yet entered into an agreement, it is expected that the provincial government will also renew its contribution. The City uses approximately half of current IAH funding for housing allowances and the remainder for retrofit and construction of affordable housing and assistance with affordable home ownership.

## **FUNDING FOR SOCIAL HOUSING**

Approximately 60 percent of ongoing social housing costs in Toronto are currently funded through transfers from the federal and provincial governments. However, over the next decade, funding commitments made by other orders of government are due to expire, placing an ever greater burden of social housing costs on the City.

The federal government currently provides funding for social housing through the *Social Housing Agreement* (SHA) signed with Ontario in 1999. In turn, the Province provides the majority of this funding to Toronto and other service managers, loosely apportioned according to historic agreements with individual housing providers in each jurisdiction. As these historic agreements expire, the associated federal funding is being withdrawn – even though social housing projects will continue to operate (in accordance with provincial legislation) and maintenance expenses will continue to be incurred. As of 2013, the scheduled reduction in federal funding has resulted in a gross loss of just under \$20 million annually. Over the next five years, these reductions will continue to accelerate, resulting in a reduction of gross funding from \$155 million in 2013 to \$117 million in 2017. In 2032, all federal funding for social housing in Toronto under the SHA is scheduled to disappear.

In addition to the ongoing pressure created by the withdrawal of federal funding, the Province announced in 2013 that it would eliminate the Toronto Pooling Compensation grant (TPC) over the next three years. This provincially-funded grant was established to mitigate the cost of the City's disproportionate share of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area's social housing stock – Toronto has more than 90 percent of the region's public housing. The elimination of the TPC will represent a further loss of \$114 million in annual funding for social housing in Toronto by 2017.

Over the next decade and beyond, the most significant challenge for social housing in Toronto is finding a way to address the growing number of major capital maintenance and repair needs in the portfolio. Although significant capital investments have been made by the federal and provincial governments in recent years, through the one-time Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program (SHRRP), this funding was inadequate to the scale of the challenge. Even after SHRRP, the level of investment required to address the current capital backlog at Toronto Community Housing alone, which comprises the oldest buildings in the portfolio, has been projected at \$862 million. TCH's capital needs over the next ten years are forecast to be \$2.6 billion. And while a full understanding of capital repair needs among the City's other non-profit and cooperative housing providers is still emerging, it can be anticipated that, if left unaddressed, total capital liabilities in that part of Toronto's social housing portfolio could exceed \$500 million in ten years.

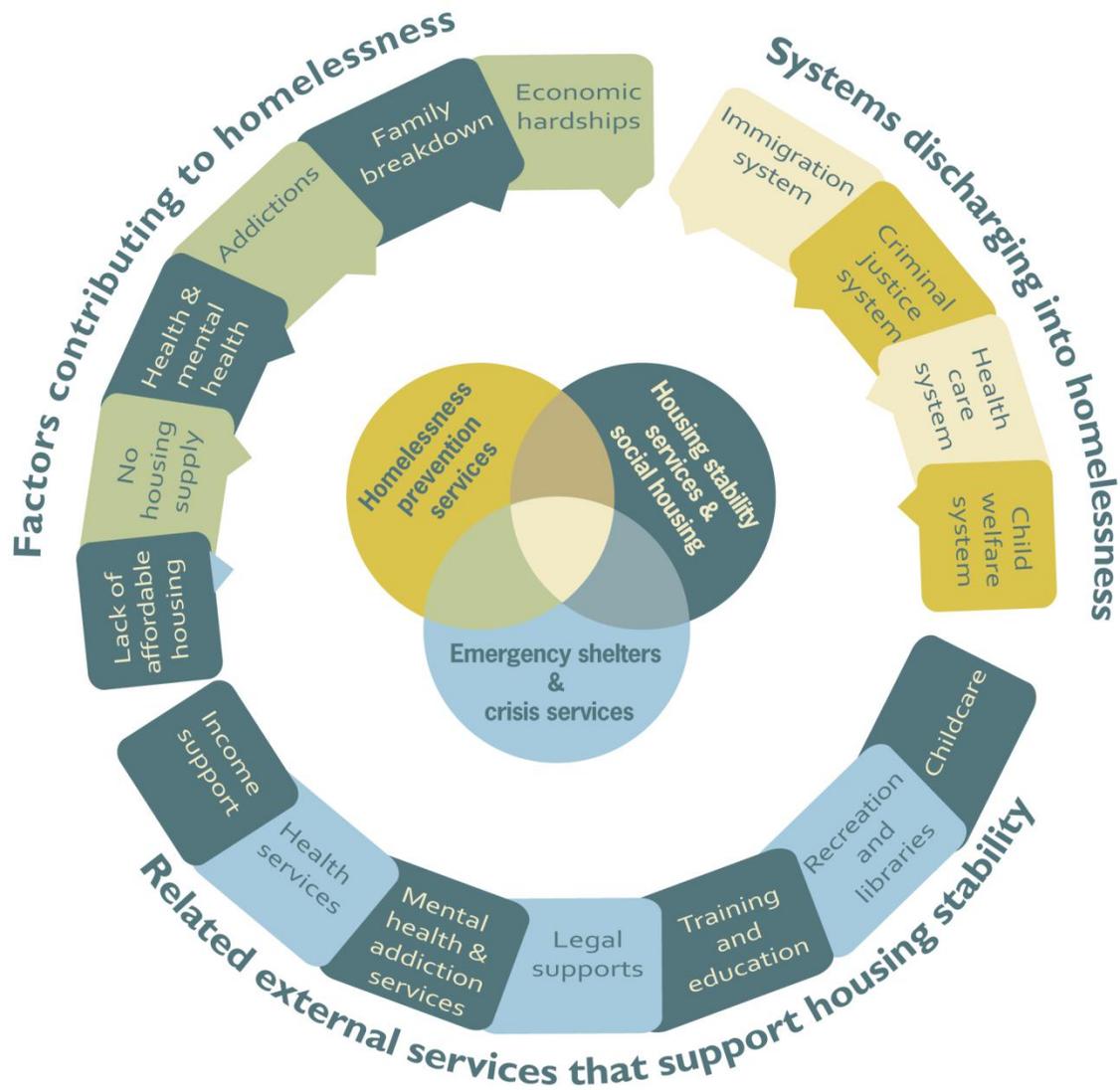
### **3.5. Overview of the current service delivery system**

#### **A COMPLEX AND INTERDEPENDENT SERVICE ENVIRONMENT**

Many factors contribute to the experience of housing instability and homelessness. These include a lack of affordable housing, insufficient supply of housing, inadequate income and/or employment opportunities, challenges or changes to an individual's physical or mental health, addictions, and family breakdown. Often, it is a series of crises that lead an individual or family to experience homelessness.

**FIGURE 2: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICE SYSTEM**

A complex range of factors contributes to the demand for assistance



The current housing and homelessness service system as depicted in figure 2 has evolved in response to the pressures of external factors and systems. Factors such as downturns in the economy, or social policy changes implemented by other orders of government impact housing instability in Toronto.

Additionally, lack of coordination among different service systems contributes to the need for the housing and homelessness services provided by the City. The health care, child welfare,

criminal justice and immigration systems, which are within provincial and federal jurisdiction, all discharge individuals and families into homelessness and the City's emergency shelter system. Inadequate capacity in provincially mandated programs, such as Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, means women seek shelter and services through the City's shelter system which puts strain on our women's shelters and leaves vulnerable women and children without the specialized services provided through the VAW sector.

The current service delivery system is characterized by the delivery of three types of services and supports for clients at-risk of homelessness: homelessness prevention services; housing stability services and social housing; and emergency shelters and crisis services. These services and supports may be delivered by the City and/or others. Activities that fall under each of these service types may be distinct to that service, or may be offered by more than one of these types of services. For example, housing help can both prevent homelessness by intervening before a housing issue results in homelessness, as well help individuals maintain housing stability by providing landlord mediation for households who are in rental arrears.

In addition to the pressures of external factors on the housing and homelessness service system, there are also many related external services that underpin and support housing stability. These services, while distinct, often work in tandem with our own housing and homelessness services to address a range of client needs. Services such as income support, education and childcare are critical to helping people address the wide range of needs that both help people improve their housing stability, as well as improve their overall quality of life.

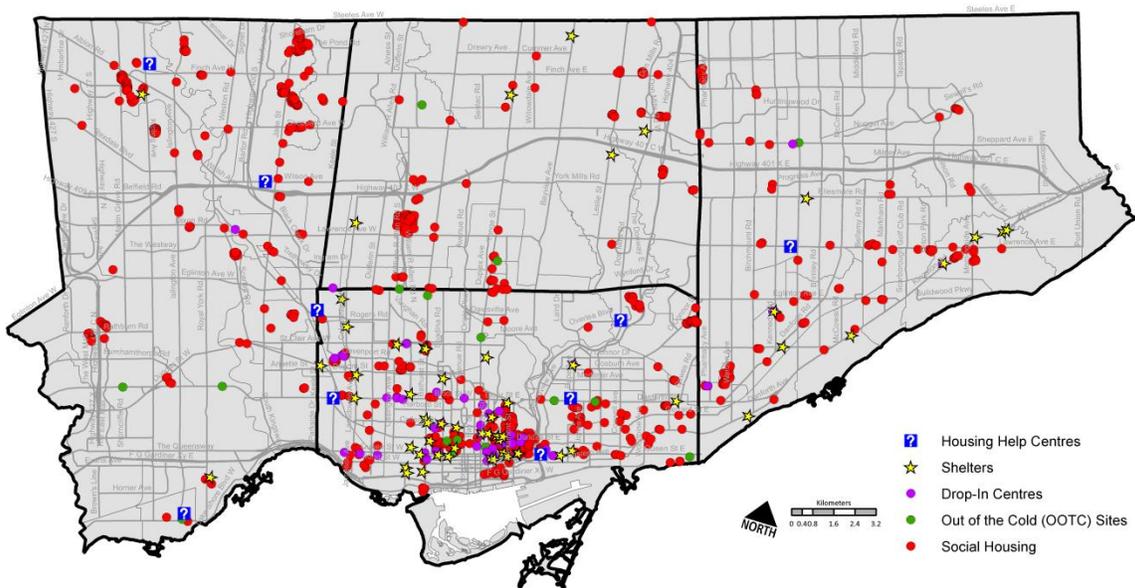
## **HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE CITY**

City-administered housing and homelessness programs in Toronto are delivered through a mixed service model where some services are operated directly by the City, with most services delivered by community agencies, either under purchase of service agreements with the City, or using City grants. Although services are available in neighbourhoods across the city, most are clustered in the downtown core as can be seen in figure 3.

**FIGURE 3: CITY-FUNDED HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SUPPORTS AND SERVICES**

Available in many neighbourhoods but clustered in the downtown

### City-funded Housing and Homelessness Supports and Services



The City provides stewardship to the system through its role as a funder, the provincial service system manager, and as the federal community entity. On behalf of the City, SSHA provides this system oversight, supports capacity building among community agencies, and is responsible for meeting federal, provincial and City Council reporting requirements.

Many thousands of people annually use the housing and homelessness services managed, funded, and delivered by SSHA. Some clients are experiencing homelessness and living in an emergency shelter or on the streets. Others live in either private market housing or in social housing but are struggling to both pay the rent and feed their families, living in poor quality housing, or need additional social and health supports.

An overview of City-administered housing and homelessness services is provided in Appendix A.

## 4. ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR SERVICE PLANNING

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### 4.1. Key challenges and opportunities

The development and delivery of housing and homelessness services in Toronto has evolved over time in response to changing community needs, the emergence of best practices, and the on-again, off-again availability of funding. An example of such evolutionary change is the City's implementation of a Housing First approach to end homelessness in 2005. This progression in service delivery was supported by an increasing body of evidence and best practices from other jurisdictions that demonstrated that helping clients to find housing and supporting them in their new homes was an effective way to help clients' transition from the street to permanent housing.

Additionally, as funding streams have been consolidated, and new funding introduced, SSHA has introduced structures to better plan the service activities and to develop resources and tools to support the community partner agencies that deliver those services. Recognizing the importance of our community agencies and housing providers as key partners in the planning and delivery of services, SSHA works closely with networks of community partner agencies to identify emerging needs and service challenges, and to develop innovative solutions.

However, as described in previous sections, the delivery of housing and homelessness programs is challenging and complex. Furthermore, the development and delivery of some programs is constrained by the fact that some funding is unpredictable and not permanent. Prescriptive funding requirements and rules have occasionally had the unintended consequence of creating isolated programs that are not well integrated with other service clusters. When coupled with the complex issues that many clients live with, the result is a service system that is difficult for clients to navigate. This is a situation made worse by the fact that overall funding for housing and homelessness services has declined even though demand has clearly been on the rise.

This Housing Stability Service Planning Framework is an opportunity to reset the scope, purpose, and delivery of existing housing and homelessness programs to an integrated client-centered system led by our common vision, goals, and objectives. At the centre of this is the goal of helping clients achieve positive outcomes through increased housing stability.

We are now facing a number of key challenges that impact service planning but also create opportunities to leverage existing resources and foster innovative and creative responses and solutions.

High rents and low vacancy rates make housing unaffordable for many people in Toronto. Many middle income households are being squeezed out of the private rental and home ownership market. This growing affordability gap puts the social housing system in Toronto under increasing pressure, with high demand for subsidized units and other housing assistance. In 2012, the demand for RGI units reached its highest level, with over 87,000 households registered on the centralized waiting list by year end, seven percent higher than 2011 and 30 percent more than when the list was established a decade ago. The supply of social housing

has not nearly kept pace with rising demand. Essentially, the overall number of RGI units remains unchanged over the past decade. As a result, the majority of applicants for RGI are left waiting up to five years before getting an offer of housing, and some wait much longer.

Meanwhile, operating agreements with some social housing providers are beginning to expire. As noted, this will result in a decrease in the already limited federal funding for social housing as well as potentially the loss of affordable stock. While this is challenging, the expiring operating agreements could provide an opportunity to explore and develop different models for social housing and new more flexible relationships with providers that meet local needs.

The 2013 Street Needs Assessment shows that the total estimated number of homeless people in Toronto remains relatively stable between 2009 and 2013. Despite this, there is increased pressure on the emergency shelter system, especially in the adult women, co-ed, and family sectors. Changes to the provincial funding model put all funding for homelessness services into a single envelope and so provincial funding for shelters no longer fluctuates with demand. Funding for shelter services is capped and this makes it difficult for Toronto to respond to shifts in demand for shelter services since increases in spending on shelters can mean changes in funding available for other homelessness services. There is only one pot of money. And with the new provincial funding model and the elimination of CSUMB, overall provincial funding for housing and homelessness services has decreased.

The bottom line is that recent policy, legislative, and funding changes by the provincial and federal governments provide both the impetus and the opportunity to develop a service planning framework that supports consolidation and transformation of existing City-managed housing and homelessness programs into an integrated, client-centered, outcome-focused housing stability service system.

## 4.2. Research and public consultation

A series of consultations throughout summer 2013 provided invaluable input from a range of stakeholders to the service planning process. We consulted with and learned from

- youth
- seniors
- Aboriginal People
- people experiencing homelessness
- people staying in shelters
- those with applications on the social housing waiting list
- housing service users
- members of the general public
- individuals and families who had recently secured housing
- housing providers
- front-line community agency and City staff who deliver housing and homelessness services or work with vulnerable populations.

We heard more than 2,000 voices through in-person discussions, online surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, a public opinion poll, and an online workbook with background information.

Additional input and advice was provided by a reference group consisting of senior representatives of City divisions that work directly with vulnerable Torontonians.

We also conducted a literature review to develop an understanding of the key principles, goals, definitions and implementation strategies used in housing and homelessness plans within a municipal or regional government framework. Housing and homelessness plans from across Ontario, Canada, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom and other research were examined to identify best practices, key common strategic areas of focus and emerging trends.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

The following is a summary of the key themes to emerge from the consultations, research, and other activities undertaken as part of SSHA's service planning process.

### **Common goal of ending homelessness**

Many of the plans that we reviewed include ending homelessness as their overarching, aspirational goal. Recently, a focus on increasing and enhancing housing stability is also emerging in other jurisdictions as part of their vision for the future or as a strategic direction of their plans.

### **Housing First approach**

Almost all of the jurisdictions reviewed based their plans on a Housing First approach to end homelessness. Housing First is founded on the principle that the first and most fundamental assistance to be afforded to people experiencing homelessness is to enable them to find a safe, secure, affordable home, with supports as necessary, from which they can make changes and stabilize their lives. Other barriers, such as lack of employment skills, addictions and poor mental and physical health, are best addressed once a person has stable housing. In a Housing First approach, housing is not dependent on the person accepting treatment for any physical health, mental health or substance use issues, although these are offered. In other words, Housing First means that housing is offered as soon as possible with few conditions.<sup>13</sup>

Toronto has embraced a Housing First approach to ending homelessness since 2005. It underpins the Streets to Homes program and is reinforced in the HOT Plan.

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<sup>13</sup> *Building on evidence: 13 things to include in Ontario's municipal homelessness reduction strategies.* Centre for Research on Inner City Health, St. Michael's Hospital.

The importance of Housing First was borne out once again in the City's 2013 Street Needs Assessment which found that 93 percent of people experiencing homelessness indicated a desire to get into permanent housing.

### **Housing affordability and other system-level challenges**

A common theme expressed by all stakeholder groups in all of the consultations was that overall housing affordability in Toronto is challenging, making it difficult for low-income families to secure and maintain housing. This challenge is compounded by a lack of availability of affordable housing and the reality that not enough new affordable housing is being built.

Clearly evident from the 2013 Street Needs Assessment is that most homeless respondents want housing and, above all else, it is a lack of affordable housing that stands in their way. To the question "What is the one most important thing that would help you get housing," almost two-thirds of responses related to housing affordability, indicating that more than anything homeless people say they need help to pay the rent.

Stakeholders raised other systemic challenges including the inadequacy of current social assistance rates, the underfunding of both the housing and social assistance service systems, and the need for increased advocacy from the City for more money for the housing and homelessness service system.

### **Access to a diverse range of affordable housing opportunities**

Stakeholders expressed strong support for mixed income communities (consistent with the vision set out in HOT) that increase community, social, and economic integration leading to increased overall housing stability. They spoke about the need for a range of client-centered services and supports to help people achieve greater housing stability and also for a range of housing options, such as increased transitional housing, to meet those needs.

A key component of many of the plans reviewed is their focus on increasing the stock and access of individuals to a full range of affordable housing opportunities such as transitional housing, long-term supportive housing, social housing, and private-market rental. This supports a Housing First service approach as it is important that a complete range of housing options be available to help achieve success. There is also consensus around the importance of mixed-income neighbourhoods and scattered housing. In other words, a full range of housing options should be available in every neighbourhood.

### **Housing stability and the importance of follow-up supports**

Housing stability is about more than just housing. There was broad consensus among stakeholders that housing stability is about having housing that is affordable, suitable, safe and in a healthy community. Feedback also emphasized the need to support residents' social, economic and community integration to help them achieve greater attachment to home and ultimately achieve greater housing stability.

Stakeholders also agreed that helping residents achieve greater housing stability is an appropriate goal for the service planning framework. At the same time, stakeholders clearly articulated that greater housing stability will not be achieved in Toronto unless there are significant improvements to the availability and types of follow-up supports for clients after they are housed or once the initial housing issue has been addressed. Again, it is not just about the housing itself.

A majority of stakeholders felt that the availability and appropriateness of follow-up supports were a critical part of a successful and sustainable Housing First approach to ending homelessness, especially for clients with complex needs.

### **Importance of homelessness prevention**

Homelessness prevention as a key priority in the overall service system received broad support from all stakeholders. This also translated to a strong belief that the City should intervene when people are in hardship as opposed to when they are about to be evicted or are looking for admission to the shelter system. Timely, targeted, appropriate and creative interventions which support the household in achieving greater housing stability can successfully help individuals and families avoid homelessness.

The majority of the plans reviewed also identified homelessness prevention as a key strategic element to end homelessness. Many plans include actions related to increasing the amount and availability of resources dedicated to prevention services. Many include actions aimed at identifying and targeting services to those who are most vulnerable and place emphasis on strengthening front-line intake and assessment to ensure individuals are connected to the right services as part of a prevention strategy.

### **Importance of client-centered services**

The importance of client-centered services was stressed by stakeholders throughout the consultations. Interventions used to help people move out of homelessness should be determined by the client's individual circumstance and needs. Stakeholders spoke to the critical importance of specialized or customized supports based on an individualized assessment of need in order to achieve greater housing stability as an outcome.

### **Perceptions of current service quality**

The degree to which services are sensitive and responsive to the client's needs and perspective also has an impact on the client's service experience. Overall perceptions of the current quality and effectiveness of housing and homelessness services by stakeholders were varied. Many believed that current services are not meeting the needs of residents. Stakeholders thought that current services providing an emergency response to homelessness, such as street outreach service or Out of the Cold meals, were more effective than services that address longer-term

housing stability needs. It seems that many stakeholders think the City is better at reacting to emergencies than meeting longer-term housing stability needs.

Ongoing and continued investments in staff training can help improve overall service quality. Many stakeholders identified the need for training to ensure staff members are able to help clients navigate services and access them easily. Training also helps front-line service providers stay current with best practices, gain additional experience and expertise assisting service users with specific needs or complexities. In recent presentations to a City standing committee, advocates have emphasised the importance of staff training in anti-oppression, anti-racism, harm reduction and understanding trauma based behaviour.

### **Information and access to services**

Stakeholders spoke about the need to increase the availability of information, and awareness among Torontonians about services, as well as a need to improve access to services. Many service users reported finding it initially difficult to access services as they did not know about them or where they were located. Improved information and access can support a greater focus on homelessness prevention.

Information about services and access to services are also mutually dependent. Vulnerable households must first be aware of services in order to access them and take advantage of them. However, clients reported finding out about the range of services through a case worker or social worker, a service provider, or through word of mouth, underscoring the importance of an existing service connection to find information about services.

Female service users reported more difficulty accessing services than men. Women were also much less likely to state that their housing situation had improved as a result of using the services and were less likely than men to say the services they had used had been helpful. This may be consistent with an analysis of shelter usage which shows higher occupancy pressures in the adult women's sector than the adult men's sector.

### **Working together better**

The importance of more partnerships and better collaboration was a theme throughout the consultations. This applied both among service providers and between the housing and homelessness service sector and other service sectors, such as health and corrections. It also applied in an inter-governmental sense as well, with stakeholders saying that all orders of government need to work more closely and more collaboratively.

Partnerships and increased collaboration are especially important as they can generate effective and innovative solutions that help meet different client needs in the community. They also support improved service access and coordinated case management for clients. Collaboration with other service sectors such as health and corrections can help reduce and prevent homelessness by ensuring common clients receive adequate supports and services, including coordinated discharge planning.

Different stakeholder groups identified that landlords, both non-profit and private sector, are key partners in the service delivery system and need to be recognized as such. Landlords can be critical in helping prevent homelessness by identifying – before a crisis point is reached – those households that may need additional supports to maintain their housing. Improved communication among clients, their case workers/managers and landlords can contribute to the early identification of any issues that may put a tenancy at-risk. In addition, partnerships with landlords are key to securing housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.

## **Service integration**

Service integration was a common theme throughout many of the different types of consultation activities. Several interpretations of service integration emerged. For some participants, it was about ensuring that clients have streamlined and simplified access to a range of services and information through a single service visit. The idea of creating more service hubs in communities across the city was frequently suggested as a way to improve service integration since this would bring together both services and service providers.

For others, improving service integration was linked to improved access and sharing of client information. This would allow front-line service workers to better understand clients' past service needs and service use, which in turn could help more effectively match them to the best services to meet their current needs.

Most jurisdictions whose plans were reviewed have also identified the importance of service integration to housing stabilization, and put this as a key strategy in their plans. Service integration makes service delivery more effective and helps to align resources to clients and their needs. Through integration, communities develop a shared system of services which are effectively coordinated, seamless and tailored to the needs of people. Integration provides an accountable response and improves the quality of outcomes for clients.

## **Importance of an evidence-based approach**

All jurisdictions that were reviewed used evidence-based knowledge to support development of their plans and to inform the evolution of the plans over time. Appropriate data and research support service delivery in several ways. Tangible evidence helps provide a better understanding of people experiencing homelessness or housing instability and their service needs. It also helps identify best practices and define service expectations.

Many jurisdictions identified the need to reform their current mainstream systems and data collection tools and several promoted or planned to implement a central homeless management information system. Establishing performance measures and collecting data lead to continuous learning with planning and funding that is strategic, innovative, flexible and sustainable. When evaluation strategies and performance measures are developed it is important that they capture

not just outputs, but meaningful outcomes such as the number of people who have moved to housing they are satisfied with.<sup>14</sup>

### **Outcome-focused service system**

The importance of an evidence based approach was also reflected in the input gathered through the consultations. There was consensus among stakeholders that an outcome-focused service system is important to ensure goals and objectives are being met. There was little consensus, however, on the best way to measure the service system's performance in helping clients achieve greater housing stability, although the suggestions indicated a strong desire for quantitative measures. One of the most common suggestions related to appropriate outcome measures that involved tracking the amount of time clients stay housed after they have moved into housing. A key piece of feedback is that improved housing stability takes time to achieve. This means that positive client outcomes may not be immediately apparent and that mechanisms to measure outcomes over time will be important.

### **Ongoing engagement**

Many stakeholders expressed the need for ongoing engagement among the City, clients, community-based service providers and staff to support ongoing service planning, partnership development and increased collaboration. Staff and service providers have on-the-ground expertise and can help identify best practices, service gaps and emerging service needs.

## **4.3. A vision for housing stability services**

The feedback and input received through the stakeholder and public consultations and the review of emerging and best practices in other jurisdictions reaffirms the City's vision in the HOT Plan that all residents should have a safe, secure, affordable, and well-maintained home from which to realize their full potential. This should be achieved through flexible and responsive services for those that need some supports that are part of a client-centered, outcome-focused, and accountable service system. Supporting households to achieve improved community, economic, and social integration contributes to the vision.

### **TOWARDS A CLIENT-CENTERED SERVICE SYSTEM**

People experience housing instability and homelessness for different reasons. For some it is due to economic circumstances or a breakdown in family relationship. For others, health, substance use and/or mental health challenges and lack of appropriate supports make it difficult to sustain employment or maintain a home. Thus, when different clients first engage with services, they exhibit a range of different needs that impact where they may be along a housing stability continuum. Where they are along the continuum depicted in figure 4 will impact what

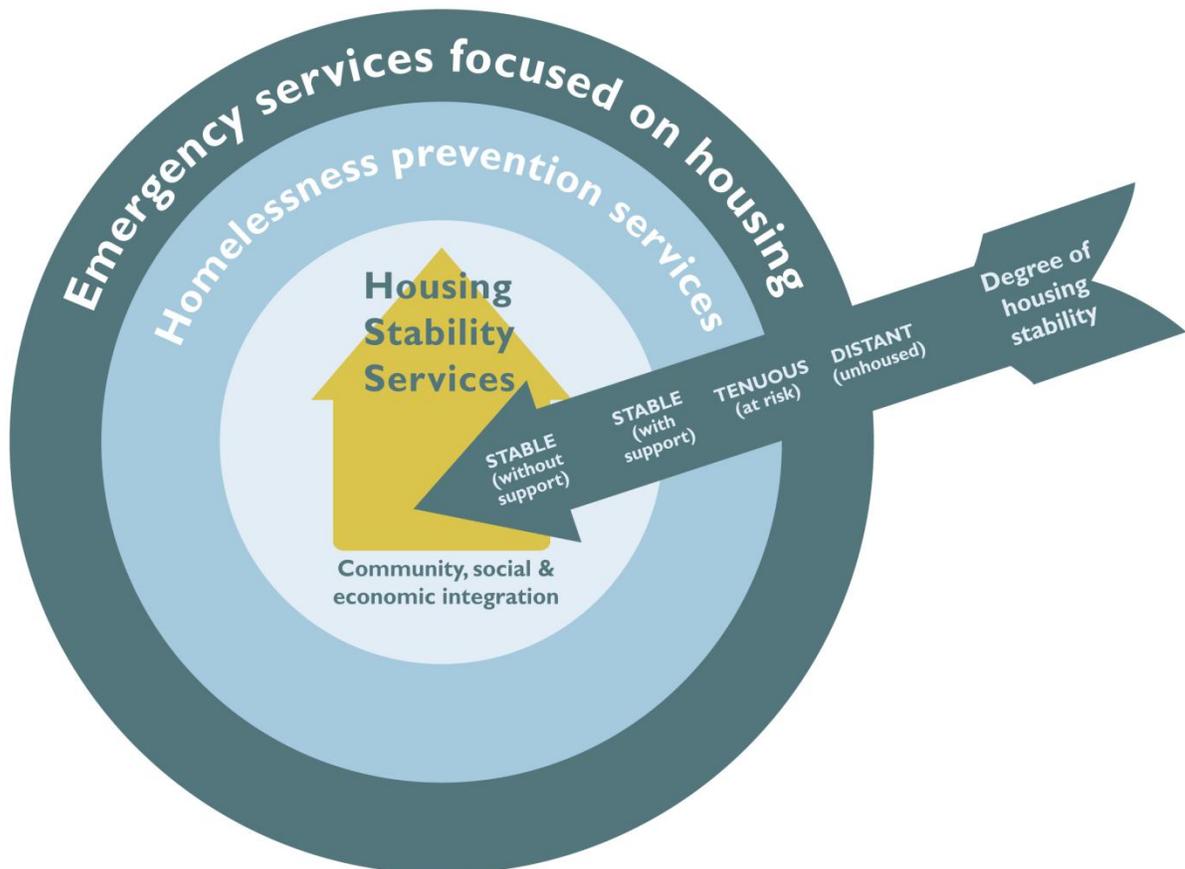
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<sup>14</sup> Building on evidence: 13 things to include in Ontario's municipal homelessness reduction strategies. Centre for Research on Inner City Health, St. Michael's Hospital, October 2013.

types of services they need and at what intensity. Therefore, helping people with different needs achieve greater housing stability requires different types and intensity of service intervention to achieve successful outcomes.

**FIGURE 4: DISTANCE FROM HOUSING STABILITY**

Services and intensity of response depend on a client's situation and may change over time



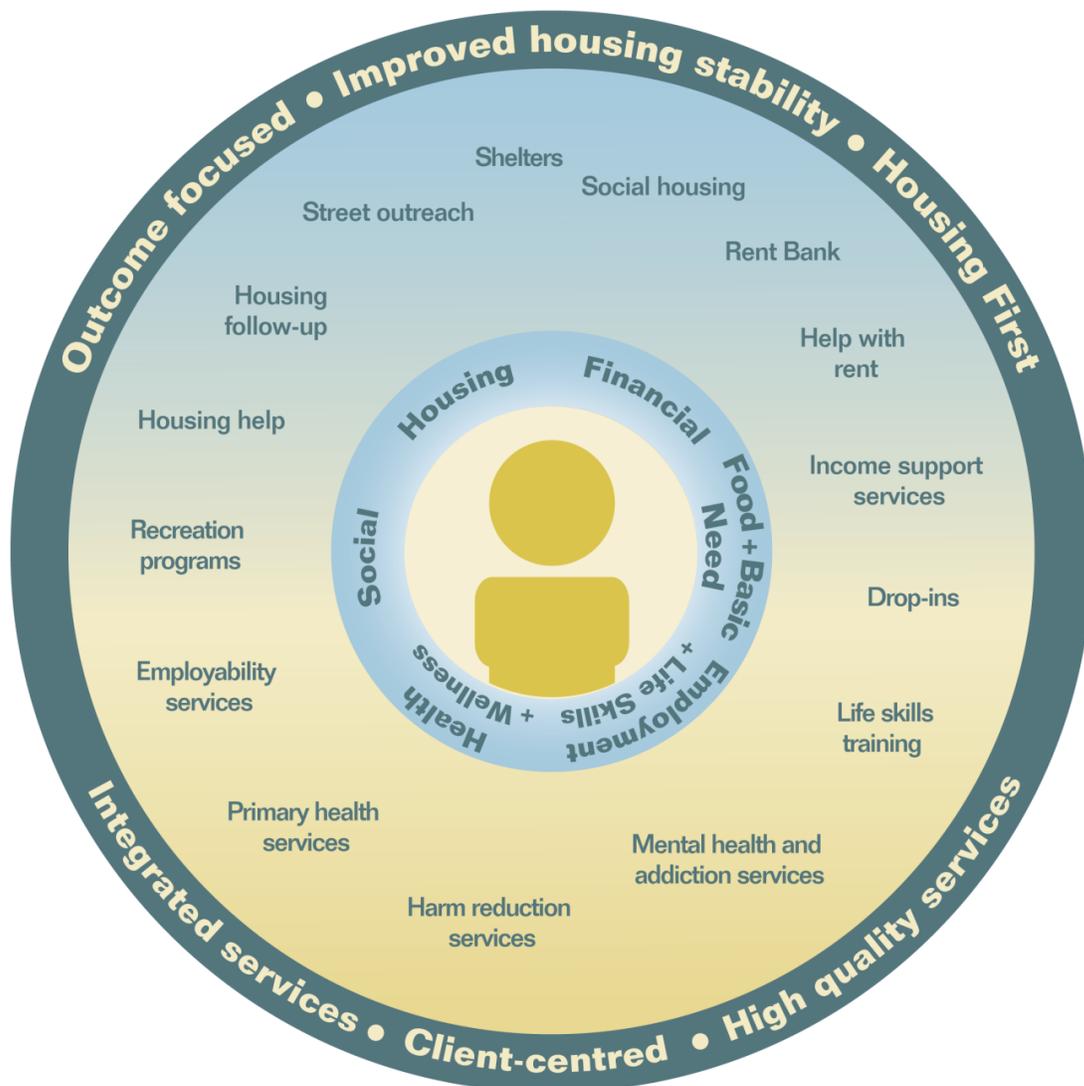
Some clients will move very quickly from being distant from housing stability and experiencing homelessness to being stable in housing and integrated into their community without any additional supports. For others, improved housing stability will require ongoing supports tailored to their needs while others may transition to greater housing stability with little ongoing support. For many, this is not necessarily a straight line experience or process. The figure above represents a way of thinking about how and when to intervene depending on people's needs, strengths, and challenges. What is critical is that clients are connected to the appropriate services to best meet their needs.

A transformed housing and homelessness service system will include a shift to client-centeredness in the identification and delivery of services. This change means that connecting clients to service will not be focused on service availability; instead it will shift to an approach

that puts the client first, identifies his or her unique needs and then connects him or her to a broad range of services. This is depicted in the figure below. This approach recognizes that access to service should not be structured around the limitations of a service system, but more importantly around the needs of a client. It is also grounded in the reality that establishing housing stability means addressing a wide range of non housing-specific needs such as social, health, and employment needs. In addition to client-centeredness, there are five additional service delivery principles which will ensure that people can access consistent, responsive services: Integrated services; a focus on outcomes; Housing First; improved housing stability; and high quality services. These principles will ensure the delivery of a service system that is of the highest quality, coordinated and designed to respond to the changing needs of individuals.

**FIGURE 5: SERVICES FROM A CLIENT-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE**

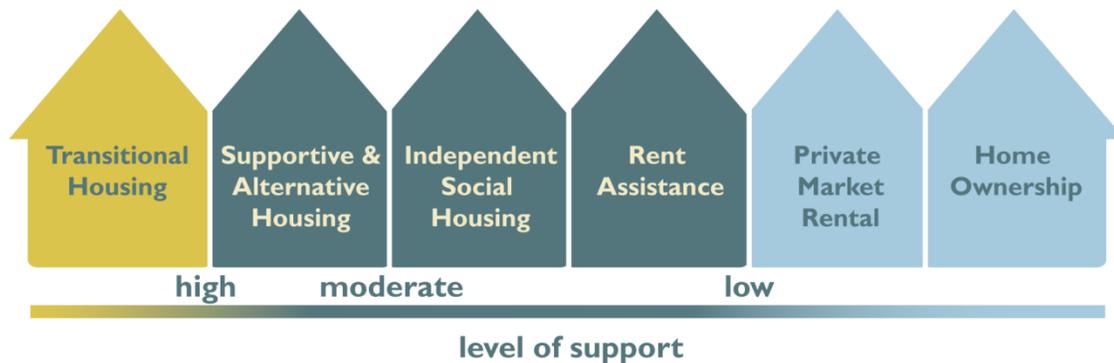
Illustrates putting the client at the centre and the services available to best meet their needs



## TOWARDS A RANGE OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

The availability of a healthy and full range of housing opportunities is critical to achieving the vision of ensuring that all residents have a safe, secure, affordable, and well-maintained home from which to realize their full potential. Any healthy and complete community includes a range of housing options from short-term transitional accommodation to subsidized options such as supportive and social housing, and options with less-intensive supports that include private market rentals and homeownership.

**FIGURE 6:** A RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS WITH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF SUPPORT



People move toward housing stability when they are able to access the right housing opportunity, coupled with the right level of service intervention. As service system manager for social housing, the City has the opportunity to ensure that housing subsidies are employed effectively to make this happen. SSHA, in this role, oversees partnerships and funding for social housing providers that provide a range of non-market and market housing opportunities as part of the range of housing options in Toronto. These community-based organizations have provided valuable assistance for many years to thousands of households, with funding from all three orders of government. In Toronto, this public investment has resulted in the creation of over 90,000 units. The renewal of these partnerships, as part of service planning, is essential in light of new challenges and opportunities.

As part of transforming the current service system to one that is more client-centered and focused on improved housing stability outcomes, it is essential that the City build on and expand partnerships with housing providers, and maximize the use of the social housing stock to meet our service planning objectives. As service system manager for social housing, the City can help ensure that housing subsidies are providing the right housing assistance, at the right time, in the right place, and with the right supports.

## 5. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR SERVICE PLANNING, 2014-2019

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Achieving greater housing stability can be difficult for many people. The service system has to be flexible to meet clients where they are at any point in time by providing referrals and delivering services to help people meet their unique needs. Ultimately, housing stability increases as one's house becomes one's home.

For SSHA, this means having a framework for service planning that will transform the system into one that is client-centred, outcome-focused and approaches all of the different types of service intervention in an integrated and coordinated way.

We need to leave behind the service system that has evolved into one that works in silos, focussing on responding to emergency situations, while administering an inadequate supply of downloaded RGI housing according to prescriptive provincial regulations. We have to do better than that.

### 5.1. Guiding principles

The development of this Service Planning Framework is being guided by the following key principles:

1. A Housing First approach to helping people find and maintain permanent housing
2. A focus on helping the most vulnerable
3. A commitment to achieving the most positive outcomes for clients
4. Services that are easy for clients to access and are integrated and administratively streamlined
5. System change that is phased in over time to avoid disruption in service to clients
6. Engagement of service users, community partners and stakeholders in developing priorities and solutions
7. Directions that are consistent with Council policy including the HOT Plan, the City of Toronto Strategic Actions 2013-2018, the Toronto Senior's Strategy, the housing policies of the City's Official Plan, and Equity, Diversity, and Human Rights policies.

### 5.2. Strategic directions

The seven strategic directions presented below, which were identified through consultation with clients and residents, service providers, City staff, and other community stakeholders, will support and strengthen housing and homelessness services over the next five years and help achieve the desired outcome of improved housing stability. They are presented here, along with key actions and success factors.

The first three strategic directions address the needs of SSHA's program areas; the other four directions focus on the management of the service system. Together they work towards transforming the housing and homelessness service system overseen by SSHA from one focused on emergency responses into one aimed at coordinated delivery of services that are client-centered and support all households to achieve housing stability.

## **PROGRAM TRANSFORMATION DIRECTIONS**

1. Preventing homelessness
2. Supporting the transition to housing
3. Creating housing opportunities

## **SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION DIRECTIONS**

4. Fostering system stewardship and innovation
5. Improving access and equity
6. Delivering high quality service
7. Strengthening partnerships and coordination

## **Strategic direction 1: Preventing homelessness**

The best way to address the challenge of homelessness in Toronto is to ensure that households that are at-risk of ending up on the street or in a shelter – whether as a result of a catastrophic life event or due to ongoing service needs – remain housed. Homelessness prevention services, including eviction prevention, coordinated discharge planning, and ongoing housing supports are a priority in service planning processes.

Preventing homelessness requires collaboration across a wide range of sectors and stakeholders, including public health, primary health, mental health and substance use services, corrections, child welfare, social housing providers and private landlords. Timely, appropriate, and creative interventions can successfully prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless in the first place and support them in achieving greater stability in their housing.

## **SUCCESS FACTORS**

- People at-risk of losing their housing remain housed
- The number of people being discharged into homelessness is reduced
- People experience improved community, social, and economic integration
- People retain and improve the quality of their housing

## KEY ACTIONS

- 1.1 Develop a comprehensive eviction prevention strategy that builds on relationships with TCH, non-profit and cooperative housing providers, private-sector landlords, community partner service agencies and other City divisions that encounter vulnerable households.
- 1.2 Develop partnerships with the health care, child welfare and corrections systems to coordinate transition planning strategies that prevent people from being discharged from other service systems into homelessness.
- 1.3 Drawing from best practices, identify priorities and resource requirements to improve the effectiveness of housing follow-up support services aimed at achieving stable and successful tenancies.
- 1.4 Leverage investments in community-based programs that increase community connectivity, social integration, and economic well-being in order to support successful tenancies.

## Strategic direction 2: Supporting the transition to housing

SSHA provides a range of emergency and transitional services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness to ensure that everyone has access to at least temporary accommodation and can meet their basic needs. Many of these services have seen their mandate expand in recent years to meet the pressures of increasing poverty and insufficient housing.

Going forward, SSHA will seek to transform services for those experiencing homelessness from strictly temporary solutions (such as a shelter bed) to those focused on supporting a transition to permanent, stable housing consistent with the Housing First approach.

## SUCCESS FACTORS

- Those experiencing homelessness move into housing
- The number of people living on the streets is reduced
- The average length of stay in the shelter system is decreased

## KEY ACTIONS

- 2.1 Refocus the Streets to Homes program to ensure program resources are best targeted to helping persons living without shelter find and maintain housing.

2.2 Develop a service delivery model in consultation with community and other service partners that

- ensures every person entering the emergency shelter system has an individualized service plan in place and supports to move out of the shelter and into housing within a defined timeframe
- addresses the complex needs of clients who stay in shelters longer than one year.

2.3 Develop a new shelter funding model in consultation with shelter providers that is predictable and performance based with a continued focus on moving shelter users into appropriate housing as quickly as possible.

## Strategic direction 3: Creating housing opportunities

Whether it is the persistently high share of Toronto households that reside in unaffordable, unsuitable or inadequate housing, or the ever-increasing number of applicants on the social housing waiting list, there are clear indications that Toronto faces a housing *opportunity* challenge.

In part this challenge is met by the work of the City's Affordable Housing Office, which supports the development of new affordable housing stock, in addition to other vital housing programs. SSHA has an equally important role to play in creating new housing options for vulnerable Toronto households by working collaboratively with private sector landlords as well as existing affordable and social housing providers, providing direct financial assistance to increase affordability and by pursuing reforms to outdated policies and systems that may no longer meet today's housing needs.

### SUCCESS FACTORS

- The availability of housing options for clients with a range of service needs is enhanced through new programs, new service linkages and by developing new ways to connect clients with the services they want and need

### KEY ACTIONS

3.1 Create a permanent housing allowance program to help address housing affordability challenges.

3.2 Create a proactive, coordinated access system for social and affordable housing, consistent with Council direction, by implementing changes to City policies, modernizing system administration and empowering applicants with better information and more choices.

- 3.3 Develop a strategy that leverages existing shelter and housing assets to create a range of housing types and supports to meet the diverse and changing needs of households as they transition to housing stability.
- 3.4 Develop a strategy to work with private-sector landlords to create new points of entry to housing for clients experiencing homelessness or affordability issues and to help resolve tenancy issues.
- 3.5 Review the service-level standards and rules governing the administration of rent-geared-to-income housing and develop recommendations for a standard that is inclusive of a range of City-administered housing options.

## **Strategic direction 4: Fostering system stewardship and innovation**

Moving from a system that is primarily focused on short-term emergency responses to one that is focused on long-term innovative solutions will improve residents' housing stability. But changes need to be made gradually so as not to destabilize the current service sector. Service planning needs to ensure the financial sustainability of housing programs as well as the overall sustainability of our shared assets and infrastructure such as shelter sites and social housing developments. Good stewardship of the housing stability service system will be key to the transformation of the system itself.

In order to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of housing and homelessness services in Toronto, SSHA will pursue opportunities for system innovation, review and implement appropriate accountability measures, and protect and invest in assets over the long term. A key part of this strategic direction is service planning to ensure sustainable and predictable funding for programs, shelter sites and social housing. It also means having the appropriate policies, administrative structures and contractual terms in place so that investments in the housing system meet their stated aims; in other words, ensuring that SSHA is an effective steward of the housing stability service system.

### **SUCCESS FACTORS**

- The City-administered social housing portfolio is responsive to evolving housing needs and is sustainable in the long-term
- Asset management processes improve
- Contracting with SSHA is simplified for community partner agencies

### **KEY ACTIONS**

- 4.1 Protect and leverage public investments in social housing by
  - developing a strategic framework for continued operation of social housing projects whose operating agreements are expiring

- continuing to support implementation of the recommendations of the Special Housing Working Group and Council's ten year capital financing plan for TCH
- developing a social housing asset management and capital renewal program that supports non-profit and co-operative housing providers
- supporting the City's advocacy with other orders of government to create a sustainable funding program for the social housing portfolio.

4.2 Address the long-term sustainability of the shelter system through the development of a ten year capital management and infrastructure strategy that supports the maintenance and redevelopment of shelter sites city-wide and is sensitive to changing and diverse needs of people who are homeless.

4.3 Strengthen program administration by improving contract management, program monitoring and accountability practices.

## Strategic direction 5: Improving access and equity

Consistent with Toronto's Housing Charter, all Torontonians have a right to access housing and homelessness services that address their needs, without being disadvantaged as a result of identity, ability or where they reside in the city. SSHA is committed to ensuring that all households are treated in a fair and equitable manner when seeking housing assistance.

This includes connecting people to appropriate supports while recognizing that one-size does not fit all and that some may require access to specialized services. Offering clients streamlined, coordinated, and equitable access to a range of housing services is necessary if people are to be connected with the right supports.

This also means acknowledging that in the case of housing subsidy programs, due to insufficient supply, many households may not have their needs met within an optimal timeframe. In such cases where there are fewer resources available than households to receive them, it is incumbent on SSHA to ensure that the allocation process is as transparent, accountable and fair as possible.

### SUCCESS FACTORS

- All households are treated fairly in accessing housing and homelessness services that address their needs

### KEY ACTIONS

5.1 Ensure information about services and resources is easy to access, up to date, and accessible to all clients.

5.2 Develop comprehensive strategies to ensure that housing services are responsive to the needs of specific client groups including women, seniors and older adults, Aboriginal People, LGBTQ, and people with substance use and/or mental health issues.

5.3 In consultation with community partners, improve shelter access and service outcomes by

- strengthening the existing centralized access system for shelter services
- developing a co-ordinated, outcome-focused needs assessment system for clients accessing shelter services.

5.4 Develop an occupancy policy for the shelter system to ensure all people experiencing homelessness seeking a bed can be accommodated in a timely manner that respects client diversity and choice to the greatest extent possible.

5.5 In consultation with community partners, service users and other stakeholders, develop a harm reduction framework for shelter services that enhances client access and choice.

## **Strategic direction 6: Delivering high quality services**

All clients are entitled to respectful and considerate treatment by SSHA-related service providers, from the individual receiving support in moving off the street to the family seeking to register for the social housing waiting list. SSHA will work with community partners to ensure that all City, agency and housing provider staff deliver high quality customer service. This will involve new staff training and development as necessary, quality assurance reviews, and housing service sector support initiatives that increase the quality of services being delivered. In addition, improving the collection and reporting of service information to ensure client-focused outcomes are being achieved is key to ensure high quality service delivery.

### **SUCCESS FACTORS**

- People are satisfied with the services they receive

### **KEY ACTIONS**

6.1 Implement an SSHA People Plan including a recruitment strategy, staff training, customer service standards and initiatives that boost employee health and wellness in the workplace including strategies to mitigate the negative health impacts of working in highly stressful environments.

6.2 Review and update the current Shelter Standards to provide shelter operators and clients with a clear set of guidelines and expectations for the provision of shelter services to ensure services are delivered in ways that are client-centered and respect client diversity.

- 6.3 Improve the collection and reporting of service information by developing detailed performance indicators that define and measure the achievements of service goals and objectives.
- 6.4 Expand the capacity of the Shelter Management Information System (SMIS) as a City-wide housing services management information system.
- 6.5 Continue to monitor best practices and research in the field of housing and homelessness and apply this knowledge as necessary to programs and services in Toronto.

## **Strategic direction 7: Strengthening partnerships and coordination**

The housing and homelessness services provided by the City of Toronto would not be possible without partnership and collaboration between SSHA and a wide range of community-based agencies and service providers. However, there still exist a number of yet to be realized opportunities to enhance services for system users through further service integration and/or coordination and the development of new partnerships. As such, SSHA will engage with partners on ways to enhance service delivery by leveraging existing opportunities, identify service needs and gaps, and implementing best practices.

### **SUCCESS FACTORS**

- The number of partnerships developed is increased
- There is meaningful engagement with stakeholders

### **KEY ACTIONS**

- 7.1 Support and help foster local capacity building initiatives that promote coordination among community partner agencies.
- 7.2 Explore ways to improve service coordination with community partner agencies and other City divisions working with vulnerable persons or with mutual interests such as the Affordable Housing Office, Employment & Social Services, Children's Services, Municipal Licensing & Standards, and City Planning.
- 7.3 Increase coordination with the health care system and City divisions such as Toronto Public Health and Long-Term Care Homes & Services to better connect vulnerable people experiencing homelessness to appropriate services.
- 7.4 Increase and enhance engagement opportunities through the development of a community engagement framework to support ongoing service planning.
- 7.5 Partner on research initiatives to support evidence-based policy development.

## 6. CONCLUSION

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The purpose of the 2014-2019 Housing Stability Service Planning Framework is to guide the planning, management and delivery of SSHA's housing and homelessness services to Torontonians. It is a roadmap to the transformation of the service system from one focused on emergency responses to homelessness into an integrated service system focused on helping people achieve greater housing stability.

Priorities, actions, and new initiatives undertaken over the next five years will support seven divisional strategic directions and be consistent with this plan. These directions and actions are based on input received from stakeholders including service users, community partner agencies and the general public, documented best practices from other jurisdictions, as well as the opportunities and challenges in housing and homelessness service delivery facing Toronto over the next few years.

SSHA is committed to adhering to the principles that support this proposed Housing Stability Service Planning Framework including the focus on Housing First, service integration and coordination, and improved information and access to services.

Service planning is a continual and ongoing process. Community consultation is a key element in this process. A critical next step will be the development and implementation of a community engagement strategy to continue the conversation which took place during the Toronto Housing Services Consultations with key stakeholders including clients, the general public, community partners, and staff. Housing stability is a system goal. Achieving this goal will require enhanced collaboration and coordination with a wide range of community partners and stakeholders. Ongoing and meaningful engagement is key to successful service planning, building partnerships and improving service integration.

Key elements of a proposed ongoing community engagement strategy include

- Developing a broad-based multi-stakeholder community leadership forum to support ongoing service planning
- Establishing a process to engage with service users and people with lived experiences of homelessness
- Ensuring that forums for consultation are inclusive of a broad range of stakeholders that include service users, community service providers, researchers and academic representatives, community leaders, other City divisions and representatives from other orders of government, City staff and the general public
- Exploring a range of modalities and formats for ongoing engagement that allow for enhanced opportunities for participation and varied input
- Establishing mechanisms to ensure that stakeholder input and the outcome of the consultation process are reflected in policy and program decisions.

This framework and the strategic directions outlined in this report provide a broad overview of the key elements of a transformed housing stability service system. SSHA is also committed to developing more detailed performance measures and improving the collection, reporting and monitoring of service outcomes. Through continued community and stakeholder engagement and consultation, the City will be able to more effectively advance the collective efforts to develop a well functioning and integrated housing stability system.

At the end of five years, the goal is to achieve improved service quality, increased access to services, strengthened partnerships, and better coordination between service providers including the City, resulting in better outcomes for vulnerable, low-income Torontonians.

## **APPENDIX A: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES ADMINISTERED BY THE CITY**

The following provides an overview of the housing and homelessness services administered by SSHA and other City divisions.

### **SOCIAL HOUSING**

As the provincially-designated service system manager for social housing, the City has funding and oversight relationships with over 240 community-based non-profit housing providers. The City is also the owner (sole shareholder) of the largest municipal housing company in Canada, Toronto Community Housing (TCH). SSHA fulfills the service manager role for social housing on behalf of the City.

The social housing that SSHA administers is home to more than 91,000 Toronto households. Approximately three quarters, or some 69,000 households live in rent-geared-to-income units, calculated at 30 percent of the household's gross income. More than 58,000 social housing units are owned and managed by TCH. Community-based non-profit and co-operative housing corporations provide the remaining units, along with private sector landlords through rent supplement agreements.

Social housing providers are landlords but they receive operating funding in order to provide affordable and safe housing for their residents. Some housing providers offer various support services to their residents funded through a range of different sources.

Residents generally access subsidized social housing through the centralized waiting list system administered by Housing Connections, a subsidiary of TCH. Housing providers may also have referral agreements with service agencies for some or all of their units or accept applicants directly.

At the end of 2012, there were more than 87,000 households representing more than 161,000 people — only slightly fewer than the number of individuals already living in TCH — on the centralized waiting list for social housing. This is the highest level of demand for social housing recorded since the list was established in 2002.

### **HOUSING ALLOWANCE PROGRAMS**

In addition to social housing, the City administers housing allowance programs which provide qualifying tenants with a fixed amount of money on a monthly basis to help pay the rent. As of 2013, more than 4,000 households received \$250 or \$400 a month through the Toronto Transitional Housing Allowance Program (TTHAP) funded by the federal-provincial IAH program.

Housing allowances are an increasingly important component of the housing supports available in Toronto, in part due to their flexibility in helping people meet their housing needs.

Partnerships with the Ministry of Finance and other City divisions have enabled their delivery and supported successful housing allowance programs. These partnerships will continue especially as the use of allowances expands.

**EMERGENCY SHELTER SERVICES**

Emergency shelter services must play an important role in any overall housing and homelessness services system. They are available at a time of crisis in people’s lives to provide them immediately with temporary accommodation and help them find and move into permanent housing. In response to limited availability of affordable housing and reductions in other service sectors, over the years shelter services have expanded to provide transitional services, and, in some cases, de facto permanent housing where there have not been appropriate housing options available to meet clients’ needs. An example of this is the long-term care program for elderly men experiencing homelessness at Seaton House, a City-operated shelter for adult men. These transitional shelter programs are typically designed with a longer period of stay in mind and can only be accessed through referral after a client assessment has been made.

Toronto's City-administered shelter system is currently comprised of a base capacity of 3,800 permanent beds at 57 shelter locations. Nine of these locations, with approximately one-third of the system’s capacity, are operated directly by the City through SSHA. Through purchase of service agreements with the City, 30 non-profit organizations operate the remaining 48 sites. There are over 727 additional beds that supplement the base capacity including emergency spaces, motels when family shelters are at or near capacity, and Out of the Cold programs.

The current capacity is allocated between the different shelter sectors as follows:

	Shelter Sector					
	Total	Adult Men	Adult Women	Mixed Adult	Family	Youth
Total Capacity	3,800	1,662	537	298	806	497
Emergency Shelter Capacity	2,776	1,056	477	206	650	387
Transitional Shelter Capacity	1,024	606	60	92	156	110

While the number of unique individuals seeking emergency shelter services has declined over the past two years, the average length of stay in shelters has increased. This has pushed nightly occupancy rates up and increased pressure on shelter capacity.

There is also evidence that City shelters for women are absorbing overflow from the provincially mandated VAW shelters. In 2012, Toronto's emergency shelter system admitted more than 840 unique clients self-reporting they were fleeing violence. This translates to 5 percent of all admissions to the emergency system in 2012.

## **STREETS TO HOMES**

Streets to Homes is an outreach-based program focused on helping people living outdoors or who are street involved and homeless move into permanent housing. It uses a Housing First approach and is based on a partnership model between City staff and a number of community-based programs run by non-profit agencies. People access Streets to Homes services through contact with a street outreach worker or through the Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre, a centrally located 24/7 facility that provides a number of services targeted at those who are essentially living on the streets.

Streets to Homes delivers a range of services including

- the Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre (SHARC) at 129 Peter Street in downtown Toronto
- street outreach services that include a multi-disciplinary team to work with people experiencing mental health issues and/or concurrent disorders housing supports and follow-up
- community response and specialized programs for individuals being released from custody, people who are Aboriginal, and newcomers.

At the SHARC, individuals can get street respite, use the shelter referral service to get a shelter bed, and use the housing walk-in program which assists eligible individuals to find permanent housing and connects them to follow-up supports once housed. Additionally, through the Transition to Housing program, up to 40 beds are available at this site for individuals and couples who are living outdoors or who are street involved and are actively working on a housing plan with a Streets to Homes counsellor.

Since inception in 2005, Streets to Homes has housed more than 4200 people directly from the street into permanent housing. Over eighty percent of clients remain housed 12 months after they initially found housing.

In 2012, the Streets to Homes Program worked with over 3000 unique individuals including 717 new clients encountered by street outreach staff. Staff helped 437 unique individuals to find housing, and another 208 people were re-housed. More than 1300 people also received follow-up supports to assist them to keep their homes.

## **HOUSING STABILITY AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION SERVICES**

Housing stability and homelessness prevention services provide important supports to clients to help them find and maintain permanent housing. These services are mostly operated by community agencies funded through SSHA. Currently, 112 community partner agencies provide over 200 housing and homelessness supports and services. These services include drop-ins, housing help, supports to daily living, tenant supports, and employability services.

Drop-in services help people experiencing homelessness or housing instability by providing them with a safe space where they can have meals, take a shower, do their laundry, meet with outreach or follow-up workers, and engage in group activities to foster social and community

connections. Toronto drop-ins receive over 800,000 visits annually and the daily average number of users per drop-in is 105. In 2012, SSHA funded 30 community agencies to operate drop-in services.

Housing Help Centres (HHCs) are located in neighbourhoods across the city and help people to find and keep housing through housing search assistance, help with housing applications, counselling, budgeting supports, landlord mediation, and referrals to other services in the community. There are nine HHCs operated by eight community agencies and all but one are also Rent Bank Access Centres. Six of the agencies also provide specialized housing help services through intensive case management programs for clients with complex needs. In 2012, more than 19,000 clients were served through the HHCs.

Other housing help services are provided by an additional 36 community agencies. These programs either provide specialized supports to targeted client groups such as youth, seniors, Aboriginal People, immigrants and newcomers, or provide such services such as bed bug remediation, employability supports or trusteeship programs.

The Toronto Rent Bank prevents evictions by providing low-income tenants who do not receive social assistance and who are in imminent danger of eviction due to unpaid rent with interest-free loans to cover rental arrears. Rental deposit loans are also available to cover first and last month's rent so that households can move into more affordable accommodation. Over 1,000 Rent Bank loans are approved annually.

Supports to Daily Living (SDL) services assist vulnerable tenants living in social housing who require significant personal supports in order to retain their housing. These tenants generally have complex needs such as mental health or addiction issues, or may be victims of violence. There are 11 community agencies that provide these services and more than 2,000 households were served in 2012.

Tenant supports help low and moderate income tenants in private rentals across the city maintain housing stability by providing them with information about tenant rights and through referrals to other appropriate services. The Tenant Hotline is an example of this. In 2012, it responded to over 9,000 service requests.

SSHA provides two types of employability supports to its clients within a shared-delivery model that includes direct client service and system support. The SSHA Employability Support Team provides direct service to clients such as vocational assessment, work preparation and job coaching. In addition, the SSHA team provides system support to both City-operated and community-delivered service providers through knowledge exchange and sharing of best practices to facilitate a range of employability programming. In 2012, the Employability Support Team served more than 790 participants. Further, the SSHA team actively engages and educates the broader service and stakeholder community to envision, promote and implement employability strategies that assist in ending homelessness.

## **OTHER SERVICES AND SUPPORTS**

The Affordable Housing Office (AHO) leverages City, provincial, federal and private sector resources to facilitate the construction of new affordable rental and ownership housing. The AHO also administers programs aimed at providing home ownership opportunities for lower income households and retrofitting housing to maintain its suitability for an aging population.

Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) also provides a range of supports and services through income supports, employment services, and case management that help people improve their housing stability. The Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF) administered by TESS helps people receiving income support from Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). These funds help people to avoid eviction or move to more suitable housing with non-repayable, limited financial support for rental arrears, rent deposits, and household start-up costs. Additionally, TESS administers the Emergency Energy Fund for low-income people facing energy-related emergencies.

Other services provided through several City divisions that assist Torontonians with their housing challenges and support them in achieving greater housing stability include

- childcare subsidies available through Toronto Children's Services
- recreation programs available through Parks, Forestry and Recreation
- literacy programs and other supports through Toronto Public Libraries
- health supports including supports to vulnerable adults through Toronto Public Health
- policies and by-laws administered by City Planning including the Toronto Official Plan which sets out City Council's long-term vision for growth and development in the City and policies to preserve the existing housing stock and encourage the production of new affordable housing
- rooming house licensing, by-laws and property standards enforced by Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS) which play an important role in regulating the supply and quality of housing options in Toronto.