

Supporting People with Disabilities in Toronto during and beyond COVID-19

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Introduction

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Accessibility in the Shelter System

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Homelessness in Toronto



- Each night in Toronto, there are approximately 6000 people who are provided shelter through Toronto's shelter system
- Even before this pandemic, our system was running near capacity, despite adding over 3500 spaces in the last few years – which has almost doubled the size of the shelter system
- Issues compounded by opioid crisis with the highest recorded deaths in the month of July and pressures on the shelter system exacerbated due to COVID-19.



2018 Street Needs Assessment

Table: Health Conditions Identified by Survey Respondents

Surveyed Groups	One or More Type of Health Condition	Chronic/ Acute Medical Condition	Physical Disability	Addiction	Mental Health Issue
Outdoors	80%	38%	37%	57%	56%
City-administered shelters	52%	29%	20%	22%	26%
Single adults	64%	37%	29%	30%	32%
Families	20%	13%	4%	2%	6%
Youth	52%	18%	12%	18%	39%
24-hour respite sites	76%	42%	31%	42%	48%
VAW shelters	41%	21%	12%	7%	26%
All respondents	57%	31%	23%	27%	32%

Health Conditions Identified by Respondents

* Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses.

Toronto Shelter Standards



- City funded and operated shelters must meet the service standards articulated in the Toronto Shelter Standards
- All potential shelter residents are asked to identify accessibility or accommodation requirements (i.e., modified service requirements) and to determine service need(s)
- If required, residents are referred to an accessible shelter
- All services are required to be provided in a non-judgmental manner, free from discrimination and harassment including based on disability
- Service providers make all reasonable effort to accommodate a resident with a disability, or accompanied by service animals/ emotional support animals.

Ensuring Accessibility



- Accessibility Audit Reports were completed for existing shelters in 2017
- Improvements are required in the shelter system to meet accessibility needs of people experiencing homelessness
- Existing shelters are in older buildings which require significant capital repairs
- Some shelters have accessibility features for physical disability, but few for other types of disability
- Additional funding is required to ensure all sites are fully accessible
- The City is developing a plan to ensure all City owned public buildings will be AODA compliant by 2025 to meet legislation

New Shelter Design Guidelines



- New Shelter Design Guidelines require shelters to be compliant with the most recent accessibility legislation for permanent new shelters
- Guidelines outline design principles and best practices for the planning and design of shelters in the City of Toronto
 - Based on The City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (TADG)
- People with disabilities consulted during development of guidelines
- New and replacement shelters are being designed for accessibility for staff, clients and the public using the new shelter design guidelines
- Shelter Design Guidelines are reviewed annually

Accessibility in New Shelters



- New Shelter Design Guidelines create opportunities to increase the number of accessible beds
- All permanent new shelters developed have included accessibility features.
- Since 2018, the City has added nine new sites with a planned 737 beds
- 6 additional sites are confirmed and in development
- 20% of the new spaces are being designed to be accessible



State of Good Repair



- There is State of Good Repair (SOGR) funding to support improving accessibility in the shelter system
- The funding helps ensure the wellbeing of our shelter residents through well-maintained housing and shelter options
- Under the SOGR funding, we are planning to spend about \$2.6 million next year of accessibility related projects at the following sites
 - Assessment & Referral Centre: 129 Peter Street
 - Women's Residence: 674 Dundas Street W
 - Margaret's Respite Services: 21 Park Road

Supporting Vulnerable People with Disability during the COVID-19 Response

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City's COVID-19 Response for People Experiencing Homelessness



- SSHA implemented a three-tier response to protect people experiencing homelessness
- Prevention
 - Enhanced Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) guidance
 - Physical distancing in the shelter system
 - New temporary facilities opened
- Mitigation
 - Screening and testing for COVID-19
 - Isolation programs
- Recovery strategies
 - Recovery Programs
 - Housing



City's COVID-19 Response for People Experiencing Homelessness



\$6.1 million to shelters, 24-hour respites and drop-ins for IPAC, PPE, wage increases and grants to increase programming to achieve physical distancing

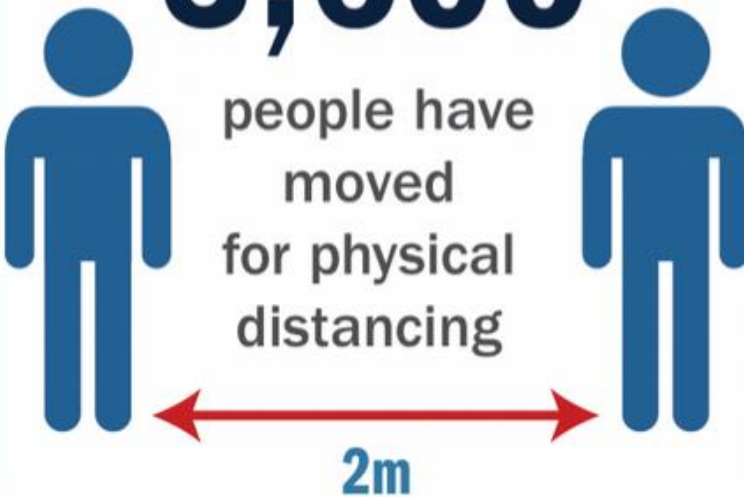
40 new facilities opened



1,960 people moved into hotels



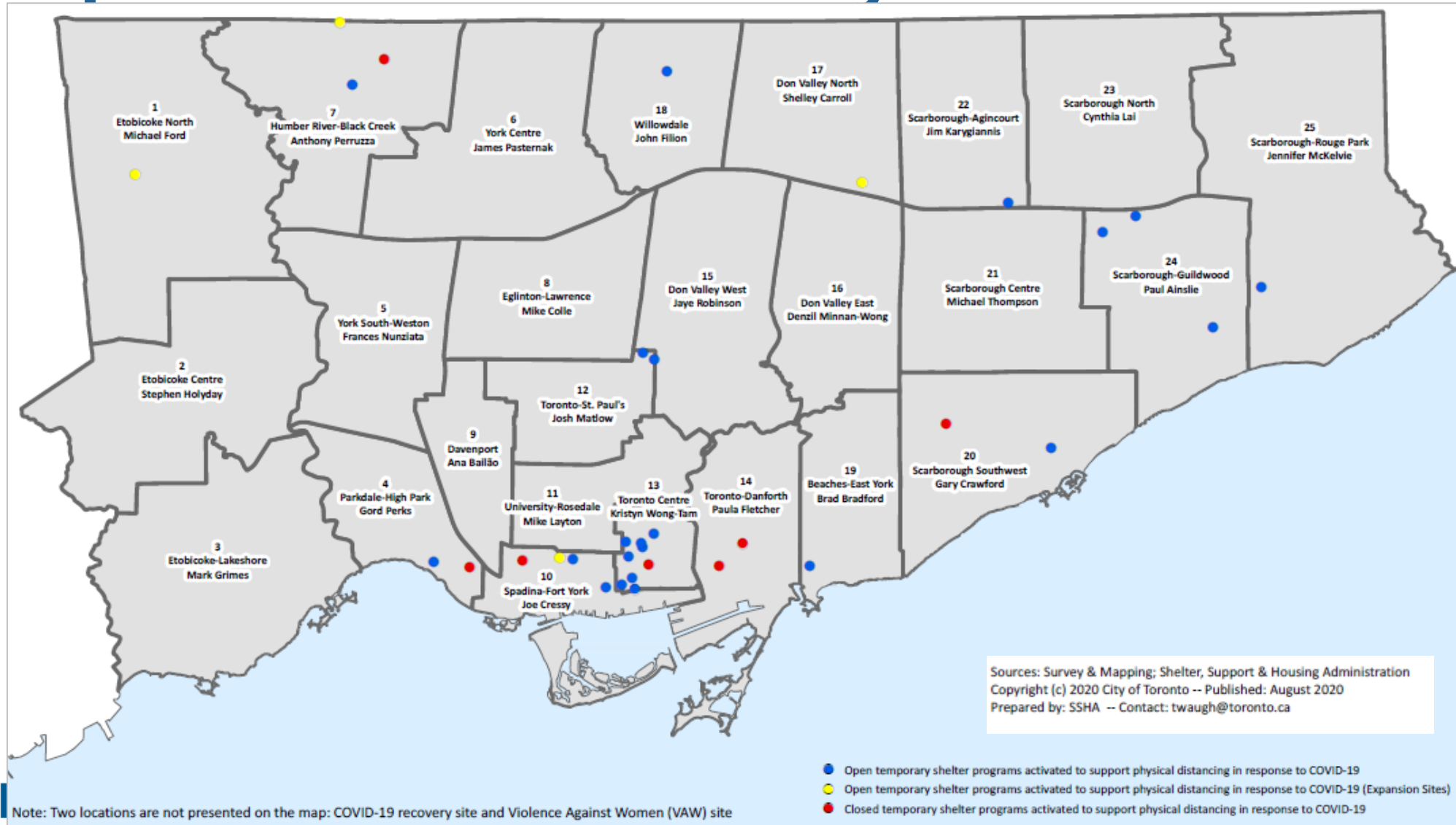
3,600 people have moved for physical distancing



800 people sleeping outdoors moved to interim housing units

19 hotel locations are operational

Temporary Shelter Programs Activated in Response to COVID-19 by Ward



Transportation

- People with disabilities were transported to COVID-19 testing sites, isolation/recovery sites and to expansion programs to facilitate physical distancing
- Staff inquired if individuals required additional assistance
- Several options were available for clients including TTC buses/ Wheeltrans, wheelchair accessible school buses and retrofitted City of Toronto Fleet vehicles
- The appropriate vehicle was dispatched to meet individual needs



Transportation



- Residents with physical disabilities (wheelchairs, motorized scooters, walkers) were provided appropriate services using TTC Wheel Trans or wheelchair accessible school buses
- Shelter residents with other types of disabilities were also accommodated (mental health issue, vision or hearing disability, etc.)
- Provided de-escalation training to drivers
- Staff accompanied residents to their new location if required
- Transported clients with service animals.

Site Assessment



- COVID-19 Response Sites were opened rapidly and a formal accessibility assessment was not feasible at that time
 - Limited by the short amount of time for site set-up
 - Difficult to assess sites while they are occupied
- Wherever possible shelter residents with accessibility needs remained at the sites with the best supports for their needs
- When residents were transferred they were taken to sites with known accessibility features
- Some City owned sites (community centres) were already AODA compliant

Accessibility Audit



- Consultants hired to complete accessibility audit of the COVID-19 response sites
 - Assess for compliance with minimum accessibility standards
 - Catalogue the accessibility of each physical distancing site to allow SSHA and partner organizations to better serve shelter residents by aligning individual needs with the best place to serve them
 - High level recommendations for measures that can be taken to improve the accessibility of individual sites
- Each site was evaluated against the current version of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Ontario Building Code (OBC), and Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (TADG) via an in person site survey
- All locations were assessed for accessibility in entry areas, reception/ lobby, sleeping areas, washrooms, common areas, and availability of braille and other visual aids

Accessibility Audit Results



- For ease of comparison between sites, sites were rated as good, fair, poor, or very poor based on the number and quality of accessibility features available on site
 - **7 sites had a good accessibility rating:** These sites had most accessibility features available. To increase site accessibility, minimal additions would be required
 - **8 sites had a fair accessibility rating:** Some accessibility features were available. To increase site accessibility, some key additions would be required
 - **6 sites had a poor accessibility rating:** Few accessibility features were available. To increase site accessibility, several new additions would be required
 - **3 sites had a very poor accessibility rating:** Met zero or almost zero accessibility requirements. To increase accessibility extensive work would be required
- Data will be used to ensure all shelter residents are being provided with appropriate level of accessibility support

Creating Permanent Affordable, Accessible and Good Quality Homes for Torontonians

Valesa Faria, Director, Housing Secretariat



The Housing Secretariat



- Plans and oversees the construction of new accessible, affordable rental and ownership housing.
- Our work is guided by and delivered through:
 - 1) Legislation, regulation and policy tools:**
 - HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan
 - Affordable Housing Design Guidelines
 - City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines
 - City of Toronto Official Plan
 - Ontario Building Code and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
 - Planning Act and Provincial Policy Statement, 2020
 - 2) Programs:**
 - Open Door Affordable Rental Housing Program
 - Housing Now Initiative
 - Modular Housing Initiative
 - Toronto Renovates program - offers programs to assist low-income seniors in making life safety and accessibility modifications to their homes

HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan



- The HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan (HousingTO Plan) was adopted by City Council in December 2019 and provides a blueprint for action across the full housing spectrum – from homelessness to rental and ownership housing to long-term care for seniors - over the next 10 years.
- The HousingTO Plan sets a target to help over 341,000 households through directing new and enhanced strategic investments from all orders of governments to:
 - Approve 40,000 affordable rental homes, including 18,000 supportive housing units;
 - Enhance eviction prevention measures;
 - Help people stay in their homes; and
 - Support in-home care and long-term care options for seniors.
- As part of the HousingTO Plan, the City is focused on increasing the supply of new affordable, accessible homes.
- The HousingTO Plan also emphasizes the need to help people modify their existing homes to promote aging in place or to adapt to changing life circumstances.

HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan

- Proposes 13 strategies and 76 actions to help households access and maintain safe, secure, adequate and affordable housing options
- Implementing the Plan is estimated to cost all orders of government \$23.4 billion, comprising of:
 - City investment of \$8.5 B (\$2.9B outstanding)
 - Federal request of \$7.9B (\$6.4B outstanding)
 - Provincial request of \$7.0 B (\$6.9B outstanding)

HOW WILL IT BE DONE?

1. Adopt a revised "Toronto Housing Charter – Opportunity for All"
2. Enhance Partnerships with Indigenous Community Partners
3. Prevent Homelessness and Improve Pathways to Housing Stability
4. Provide Pathways to Support Women
5. Maintain and Increase Access to Affordable Rents
6. Meeting the Diverse Housing Needs of Seniors
7. Ensure Well-Maintained and Secure Homes for Renters
8. Support Toronto Community Housing and its Residents
9. Continue the Revitalization of Neighbourhoods
10. Create New Rental Housing Responsive to Residents' Needs
11. Help People Buy and Stay in Their Homes
12. Improve Accountability and Transparency in Delivery of Housing Services to Residents
13. Enhance Partnerships and Intergovernmental Strategy



The Housing Now Initiative



- The Housing Now Initiative was approved by Council in January 2019 to activate City-owned land to create mixed-income, mixed-used and complete communities near transit.
- There are currently 17 sites under the Housing Now Initiative which will be used to provide homes that are safe, secure, affordable and accessible to a range of individuals.
- The following standards are required for rental units being developed at the Housing Now sites:
 - **Affordable Rental Units** - A minimum of 20% of homes meet accessibility standards and common areas must be 'barrier-free'.
 - **Market Rental Units** - The Ontario Building Code requires that 15% of the units to be barrier free
- In addition, access to the projects and all common areas must be barrier-free.
- In July 2020, Council directed staff to prioritize proposals for Housing Now sites which exceed the minimum accessibility standards and also include universal design features.

Universal Design



- In recognition of the growing need for accessible homes, and to help Toronto's population age in place, moving forward, the City will explore ways to enhance current accessibility requirements for all affordable housing programs.
 - This includes incorporating universal design to create housing that is suitable for everyone.
- Universal design will increase the supply of housing opportunities that are accessible to those with disabilities, including seniors, and help them stay in their homes as their circumstances change.
- In addition, through its affordable housing programs, the City will focus on incorporating universal design features that would benefit future tenants e.g. installing lever-style door handles and faucets; using non-slip flooring; installing smooth, low thresholds; including good, non-glare lighting; installing windows with low sills, etc.
- Planning and designing in advance to accommodate tenants' changing physical needs is not only more efficient for building owners, but more importantly, provides a higher level of stability and dignity for tenants.

Modular Housing Initiative



- April 30, 2020, Council approved the purchase and installation of **250 units** of modular housing:
 - An initial 100 homes ("Phase One") will be ready for occupancy before end of the year; and
 - The remaining 150 homes ("Phase Two") will be ready for occupancy by spring 2021.
- The initial two sites have been identified as 150 Harrison Street (Ward 9) and 11 Macey Avenue (Ward 20).
- 25% of all new modular units will be accessible.
- These modular homes will be used to provide permanent affordable housing with supports for individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness.
- Capital funding to deliver this initiative includes \$28.75 million from the City and \$18.75 million in contributions and interest-free loans from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation ("CMHC").
- The City issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in July to select non-profit organizations to operate the Phase One homes and provide onsite support services.
 - Through the RFP, the Neighbourhood Group (TNG) and COTA Health (Cota) have been selected as the operator and supportive service provider for the first two modular housing sites.

Modular Housing Initiative (cont'd)



11 Macey Avenue

Construction progress as of October 28, 2020



Rendering showing modular development upon completion in November, 2020



Rapid Housing Initiative



- The Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) was announced by the Government of Canada on September 21, 2020.
- RHI will deliver \$1 billion in grant funding nationally to rapidly create new affordable rental homes in response to the urgent housing needs of vulnerable and marginalized individuals.
- Funding will be delivered through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).
- On October 27, 2020 the Government of Canada announced **\$203 million** in capital to the City of Toronto to create a minimum of 417 units of new permanent affordable housing.
 - This funding will be transferred to the City in full upon the successful execution of an agreement with CMHC.
 - City staff will need to move rapidly to develop and submit an investment plan before **November 27, 2020** outlining the capital projects that will be built/secured with the RHI allocation in order to confirm the take-up of funds.

Rapid Housing Initiative (cont'd)



- The RHI program funding must be used to develop affordable housing through:
 1. Acquisition of land and construction of modular housing;
 2. Acquisition of land and existing buildings for the purpose of conversion; and
 3. Acquisition of land and rehabilitation of housing.
- Construction must be completed by December 2021
- Construction, conversion and rehabilitation costs are included in addition to the acquisition of land and buildings.
- Accessibility requirements:
 - Modular construction projects must exceed the Ontario Building Code accessibility requirements by providing an additional 5% of accessible units (i.e. 20% accessible units).
 - Conversions/rehabilitations must need the Ontario Building Code accessibility requirement (i.e. 15% accessible units).

Rapid Housing Initiative (cont'd)



- Priority groups to be housed through RHI include:
 - people with disabilities
 - women
 - Seniors
 - young adults
 - Indigenous Peoples (15% target)
 - Black People
 - racialized groups
 - people dealing with mental health and addiction issues
 - Veterans
 - LGBTQ2+
 - recent immigrants or refugees; and
 - people experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness



Next Steps

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Next Steps - Accessibility



- The City is committed to ensuring people with disabilities have the support they need in our medium and long term COVID-19 recovery plan
 - The long term plan has a focus on providing housing with the appropriate supports
- Accessibility is a priority for all new shelter and housing in development
- Accessibility audit data will be used to ensure all shelter residents are being provided with appropriate level of accessibility support
- Retrofitting temporary distancing sites to meet accessibility standards set in the City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines requires additional funding
- City owned public buildings will be AODA compliant by 2025

Next Steps - Consultation



- People with lived experience of disability will be included in consultations for updated guidelines for new shelter and housing
- Will engage individuals with disability as part of update to Shelter Design Guidelines
- Housing Now accessibility stakeholder working group to be convened by the Housing Secretariat:
 - To explore options to increase the number of accessible units and universal design features in Housing Now projects
 - This work will also contribute towards updating of the Affordable Housing Design Guidelines
- Continue to ensure accessibility accommodations are available when engaging local residents around new shelter locations
 - Focus on stakeholders with disability as part of shelter community engagement review